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R. C. SHERRIFF.

BADGER'S GREEN

A PLAY BY
R.C. SHERRIFF



followed by
The Cricketers of My Time
by John Nyren

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	PAGE
BADGER'S GREEN	7
Acting Appendix	130
THE CRICKETERS OF MY TIME	137

BADGER'S GREEN

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CHARACTERS

DOCTOR WETHERBY	}	<i>Gentlemen of importance in the village</i>
MAJOR FORRESTER		
MR. TWIGG		
MR. BUTLER		<i>A speculative builder</i>
MR. ROGERS		<i>Landlord of the Blue Boar</i>
DICKIE WETHERBY		<i>The Doctor's son</i>
MRS. WETHERBY		<i>The Doctor's wife</i>
MRS. FORRESTER		<i>The Major's wife</i>
MR. BUTLER'S SECRE- TARY		
MARY		<i>Maid at the Doctor's house</i>
A FEW VILLAGERS		

THE SCENE

A small Hampshire village on three late summer days

ACT I

SCENE: *Dr. Wetherby's Library : Monday afternoon*

ACT II

SCENE I: *The same : Tuesday morning*

SCENE II: *The same : Wednesday morning*

ACT III

SCENE I: *A Marquee on the Green : Wednesday
midday*

SCENE II: *The Marquee : Wednesday afternoon*



ACT I

The library of Dr. Wetherby's house, a low-built, peaceful room, overlooking the village green.

Through open windows, beyond a rather wild, entangled little garden and a tall iron gate, you can see the green turf of the cricket pitch baking in the sun. It must be scorching hot out there, but the room is cool and twilit, because big elms shade it, and ivy encroaches greedily round its windows.

Dr. Wetherby is standing in front of a cricket pad which is propped up on a chair. He is a plump, white-haired man who might be pompous if he were not so quiet and kind. He holds a saucer of liquid pipeclay in one hand ; in the other, a toothbrush with which he is applying the mixture to the pad. Newspapers are stretched out on the floor to protect the carpet.

He stands back a pace to view his work in perspective, his head a little to one side ; he returns to his work with a concentration that causes heavy, rhythmic breathing.

There is a tap on the door. A Maid comes in.

Maid. Mr. Twigg's here, sir. [The Doctor continues to work in silence.] Shall I ask him in, sir?

Doctor. [Pausing, and looking over his shoulder]. Who?

Maid. Mr. Twigg, sir.

Doctor. Good heavens! [*He consults his watch.*]
Surely it 's not three yet?

Maid. It 's quite that, sir.

Doctor. [*With a sigh.*] Very well then, Mary. Ask him in. [*Mary leaves the room.*]

[*The Doctor returns to his pad. Soon Mr. Twigg is shown in. He is rather a shy little man, with something of the air of the city about him. He is untidy, but very clean. His grey suit is old-fashioned and rather loose in cut. His panama hat has mellowed to the colour of ripe corn. There is a large flat book under his arm. He advances in a business-like way, and drops the book smartly on the table.*]

Mr. Twigg. [*Breezily.*] Well, here we are!

Doctor. [*Glancing over his shoulder without enthusiasm.*] Ah! [*He returns to his pad. There is silence for a while. Finally the Doctor speaks without turning round.*] You don't mind me just finishing this pad, do you?

Mr. Twigg. No! Carry on, please.

Doctor. You know what it is if you stop.

Mr. Twigg. I know. You don't get the same effect at all.

Doctor. You get an uneven surface.

Mr. Twigg. It really means doing it all over again. It 's exactly the same when I 'm varnishing anything. You must do the whole job, as it were, in one breath. For instance, the other

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

day I was just finishing a pipe-rack; I'd just got to the most tricky part of it—the holes for the stems—and what do you think? my house-keeper comes to say dinner's ready! Now supposing I'd just put the brush down and left it——

[Mr. Twigg is about to continue, but the Doctor turns and breaks in very kindly.]

Doctor. Yes—I say—I wonder if you'd mind not talking just for a minute.

Mr. Twigg. I'm sorry——

[Mr. Twigg fusses with his book, opens it flat, and glances at the pages. He takes a small pencil from his waistcoat pocket, goes to the windows, and sharpens it just outside. The Doctor gives one last careful touch with the toothbrush and steps away.]

Doctor. There we are!

[Mr. Twigg comes and stands beside him.]

Mr. Twigg. What a lovely surface you do get!

Doctor. It just wants care, that's all. *[He puts the saucer of pipeclay on a chair, takes the pad to the window and leans it outside in the sun to dry. [Looks round outside.]* No sign of the Major yet.

Mr. Twigg. I saw him as I came by. He was busy with his pigeons. He was just going up to have a wash. He said he'd come right along.

[The Doctor returns briskly into the room.]

Doctor. Have you fixed up about the marquee for Wednesday?

Mr. Twigg. Yes. It's coming this afternoon. Ought to be here any time now. They wanted to send us an awful black and yellow striped thing. I said 'white.'

Doctor. Good heavens, yes! Whoever heard of a black and yellow marquee for a cricket match? What do they think it's for—a school treat?

Mr. Twigg. I don't know. Those sort of people don't seem to have any idea.

Doctor. Anyhow, I hope you spoke to them pretty sharply about the one they sent last year?

Mr. Twigg. Yes, I was a bit sarcastic. I said it was usual to have a white tent for a cricket match—not a circus tent.

Doctor. Good! I'm glad you let them have it.

Mr. Twigg. You've got to—at times.

[There is a pause. The Doctor is restless.]

Doctor. I wish the Major would buck up. It's nearly ten past three.

Mr. Twigg. He'd only got to wash his hands and put his coat on. *[He goes to the window and looks round.]* Isn't that him, over there, talking to Hobson?

Doctor. *[Beside Mr. Twigg.]* Yes. *[There is a pause. They turn into the room. The Doctor speaks rather gravely.]* Look here, Mr. Twigg—before the Major comes—do you know whether this trouble's leaked out?

Mr. Twigg. I haven't heard anything.

Doctor. Nor have I—but naturally I *wouldn't* hear.

Mr. Twigg. Quite.

Doctor. I wondered whether anything had come to your ears. I've a sort of feeling the Major's been talking.

Mr. Twigg. Well, I only know I came round the corner by Turner's yesterday—and practically ran into the Major. He was talking very confidentially to the Vicar.

Doctor. Yes?

Mr. Twigg. Well, he stopped when he saw me. I felt he was embarrassed.

Doctor. What happened then?

Mr. Twigg. Well, I just smiled and walked by; but there was no mistaking a sense of—of restraint.

Doctor. What—er—did you feel about the Vicar?

Mr. Twigg. Well, he was just listening, and—and scraping the ground with his stick.

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] Yes. [*There is silence for a moment. The Doctor is deep in thought. Suddenly he turns on Mr. Twigg and speaks with emphasis.*] I'm certain the Major's talking—all over the village. It's beastly—so undignified. Now look here, Mr. Twigg. I'm quite determined about this. I'm not going to be insulted. I'm not going to have any nonsense from the Major.

Mr. Twigg. Quite.

Doctor. I've given way time and again, just simply because—well, I do *hate* nastiness. But

the Major thinks it 's weakness—he thinks I 'm afraid of him. I 've given way for the sake of the village—for the sake of harmony. But you see how it 's undermining my prestige?

Mr. Twigg. I do!

Doctor. Well, the time 's come to stand firm. I depend on you to back me up.

Mr. Twigg. Certainly!

Doctor. When it comes to my wife being insulted before the whole village, it 's time to act. You'll find I can be as firm as a rock.

Mr. Twigg. I think you ought to be. I mean, there 's no doubt people are beginning to—to *notice* things.

Doctor. In what way do you mean?

Mr. Twigg. Well, it 's difficult to—to explain, exactly.

Doctor. What 's the general *feeling* about the Major?

Mr. Twigg. Well, of course, there 's no doubt people realize what a lot he does.

Doctor. Do *you* think he does a lot?

Mr. Twigg. Well—no. Not as much as *he* does.

Doctor. Don't people realize the kind of man he is?

Mr. Twigg. I don't think so. He 's got that cheery way with the younger men.

Doctor. So the younger men support him?

Mr. Twigg. They feel he does a lot for them.

Doctor. I do nothing for them, then?

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Mr. Twigg. Of course you do. But you know what young men are. You help in a quiet way. The Major's on the surface all the time—if you know what I mean.

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] I know what you mean.

Mr. Twigg. Take the club, for instance. The Major's always down there playing billiards with them, and standing them beer. He's always telling them he presented the new billiard balls, but he never mentions that you presented the table before most of them were even *born*!

Doctor. Or that I raised the money to found the club.

Mr. Twigg. Did you?

[*There is a pause, the Doctor looks sadly at Mr. Twigg, then smiles.*]

Doctor. Did I? Didn't you—even *you*, Twigg, know that?

Mr. Twigg. [*Hastily.*] Well, I never inquired. After all, I've only been here fourteen years—the club was here when I came.

Doctor. And no one ever told you of my struggle to found the club—my two-year struggle against jealousy and prejudice? My battle with the Vicar?

Mr. Twigg. No.

Doctor. Does no one enjoy the club to-day—don't the young men enjoy it?

Mr. Twigg. Why, of course! It's *everything* to them—it's the life and soul of the village.

Doctor. —and the Major's the life and soul of the club!

Mr. Twigg. You never let people *know* what you do for them.

Doctor. Do you think I 'm the sort of man to do that?

Mr. Twigg. Well, after all, the younger men can hardly expect to know—unless they 're told.

Doctor. I should have thought perhaps the Major could have told them. [*There is a pause before the Doctor speaks again.*] What was the general feeling about the smoking concert incident?

Mr. Twigg. Well, I think some people thought you were *right* in stopping the Major from having his encore. Others thought you were *wrong*.

Doctor. Some people disputed my chairmanship, then?

Mr. Twigg. Well, they felt the Major always *has* had his encore—as long as they can remember.

Doctor. It 's the chairman's duty to call for an encore if it is warranted by sufficient public desire. There was *no* public desire.

Mr. Twigg. I know. There never is for the Major; but he always *does* sing *Dogs of Devon* as an encore, doesn't he?

Doctor. He 's sung *Dogs of Devon* for the last time under *my* chairmanship. Had he any right to get up and sing again after I had announced Mr. Hobson's conjuring tricks?

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Mr. Twigg. Certainly not.

Doctor. And yet you say people doubted my decision. [*There is silence. Mr. Twigg is distinctly uncomfortable. The Doctor speaks again, very quietly.*] Supposing, just for a moment, there were to be an open split. Supposing the Major were openly to defy my authority?

Mr. Twigg. Oh, but that *couldn't* happen!

Doctor. I said 'supposing' it did. What support would the Major get?

Mr. Twigg. Well, you can't tell. I think people would sympathize with *you* quite a lot.

Doctor. [*Breathlessly.*] Sympathize! Pity, I suppose!

Mr. Twigg. [*Hastily.*] No. That's not the word. I mean—well—everybody who knows what you've done would support you.

Doctor. And if what I've done has been forgotten?

[*Silence falls. Mr. Twigg, at the table, nervously flicks over the pages of his book. The silence is broken by the Major, who comes breezily up the garden path and through the french windows. He is a big, hearty man; getting on in life, but full of vigour.*]

Major. Sorry I'm late. I've had an awful morning. [*He throws his cap on a chair and turns with a heavy sigh.*] It's no good. I must cut things down somehow. Interviews before breakfast to-day—

Mr. Twigg. Before breakfast!

Major. Yes. *Your* work too. You 've made the most awful mess over the whist drive. D 'you know what you 've done?

Mr. Twigg. No?

Major. Well, Mrs. Montague came to see me in a terrible state. Did you order the score cards?

Mr. Twigg. Yes.

Major. Well, look what 's come! [*He flourishes a small card with a pencil hanging from it by coloured thread.*] Dance programmes!

Mr. Twigg. But I said '*Whist*'!

Major. Where 's the copy of the letter you sent?

Mr. Twigg. Well, I—I didn't take a copy.

Major. Didn't—take—a copy. [*In despair.*] Oh, my God!

Mr. Twigg. Anyhow, why didn't Mrs. Montague come to me? It 's my job.

Major. She said she did, and knocked three times without an answer. Apparently everybody was asleep. Eight o'clock on a summer morning!

Mr. Twigg. Well, I 'll write about it.

Major. Write about it! When we want the cards on Wednesday! [*He pauses, and goes on patiently.*] It 's all right. I 've sent a telegram.

Doctor. It 's nearly twenty past three. We must give the General Committee a complete report this evening. There 's a lot for us to do yet.

Major. [*Sitting down briskly at the table.*] Right away then!

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Mr. Twigg. May I propose that Dr. Wetherby takes the chair?

Major. [*Carelessly.*] I second that.

[They seat themselves at the table, Dr. Wetherby in an arm-chair on one side, the Major opposite him, Mr. Twigg in the centre.]

Doctor. I suppose we ought to read the minutes of the last meeting?

Major. Seems rather red tape, doesn't it—just us three?

Doctor. It's hardly a question of what it seems to us. The General Committee look to us for an example. I think we ought to.

Major. [*Laughing indulgently.*] Oh, yes—it doesn't matter.

Doctor. I call upon Mr. Twigg to read the minutes of the last meeting.

[Mr. Twigg clears his throat and reads.]

Mr. Twigg. 'Minutes of entertainment sub-committee of Badger's Green Cricket Club, held at Ivy House, by courtesy of Dr. Wetherby, on Thursday, 3rd August 1929.'

Doctor. Are you sure it was the 3rd? The 3rd was the Friday before Bank Holiday.

Major. Well, we met before Bank Holiday.

Doctor. I know, but Thursday was the 2nd. Bank Holiday was on the 5th; Thursday must have been the 2nd.

Major. It would have been the 1st, if Monday was the 5th—Twigg's wrong.

Doctor. Excuse me—I think you're both wrong.

Obviously Thursday must have been the 2nd—unless we met on the Friday and not the Thursday. What a pity Twigg's so unreliable.

Major. Twigg's got the *day* all right—we certainly met on the Thursday, because I remember having two other important meetings that evening—it's simply the *date* he's got wrong. Thursday was the 1st.

Doctor. Thursday was the 2nd.

Major. I tell you it was the 1st.

Doctor. [*Rising.*] Well, we can soon settle it.

[*He crosses to his desk, takes up his calendar, and brings it with quiet triumph to the Major.*] Here you are—Thursday the 2nd. It's a pity you can't trust me a little more, Major.

Major. Let me see.

[*The Doctor quietly hands him the calendar.*]

Doctor. There you are.

[*The Major studies the calendar with a perplexed face, which slowly lights up in triumph.*]

Major. This is a last year's calendar.

Doctor. There's no need to be impertinent,

Major. Considering I've used it the whole year——

Major. Well, use your eyes. [*He points.*] 1928.

[*The Doctor looks at the calendar, and silently returns it to his desk. Mr. Twigg tactfully begins to read again.*]

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Mr. Twigg. 'Minutes of the entertainment sub-committee of Badger's Green Cricket Club, held at Ivy House, by courtesy of Dr. Wetherby, on Thursday, 3rd August 1929.'

[The Doctor has returned to his seat. Mr. Twigg continues.]

'Present: Dr. Wetherby in the chair; Major Forrester; Mr. Twigg. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The question of seating accommodation was discussed. It was decided to again approach Mr. Dickenson for the kind loan of his garden seats. Proposed by Dr. Wetherby and seconded by Major Forrester that the secretary write to Mr. Dickenson, thanking him for lending his seats last year, and requesting the loan again. The secretary read a letter from Mrs. Graham, complaining that one of her chairs lent last year was returned with a broken leg——

[Mr. Twigg continues to read the minutes concerning the damaged chair.]

[The Major, who has hardly been able to sit still for triumph, begins to chuckle quietly to himself. His chuckle gradually becomes louder. He looks at the Doctor from beneath his eyebrows. The Doctor sits with a graven face for a while, pretending not to notice. At last he speaks with quiet dignity.]

Doctor. There's an old saying, Major: 'Little things please little minds.'

Major. [*Chuckling louder.*] Well, after all, it *was* funny, wasn't it? Fancy you going about not knowing what year it is!

Doctor. [*With quiet sarcasm.*] 'Little things please little minds.'

Major. I did think you could see a joke against yourself!

Doctor. I'm always glad to see small minds amused; it's not easy to provide a simple enough joke.

[There is silence. The Major still smiles to himself. Mr. Twigg, who stopped reading the minutes when the Doctor spoke, and is now sitting patiently waiting, suddenly becomes aware of the silence, and hurriedly continues to read.]

Mr. Twigg. 'The question of the marquee was then raised. Dr. Wetherby complained that the——'

Doctor. [*Breaking in.*] I don't like the word 'complained.' 'Stated' is better.

[Mr. Twigg makes the alteration with his little pencil, and proceeds.]

Mr. Twigg. 'Doctor Wetherby stated that the marquee supplied by Robinsons last year contained a thin red stripe; he pointed out that marquees for cricket matches should be a plain white. The secretary was instructed to write to Robinsons, clearly stating that a plain white marquee *must* be provided this year. Following

the General Committee's decision to dispense with a hired caterer, and form a voluntary Refreshment Committee of local ladies to arrange the tea, the question of a lady to supervise was raised. No name was put forward, and the matter was left to the next meeting. The meeting then adjourned.'

Doctor. [After a pause.] Is it your wish that I sign these minutes? [The Major and Mr. Twigg raise their hands. The Doctor produces a fountain-pen and signs the book. He then turns over the page and consults the minutes.] Points arising. The garden seats?

Mr. Twigg. Yes. I've seen Mr. Dickenson; everything's all right. His five seats will take twenty-five. Mrs. Graham will lend her chairs. So, with the benches, we can seat nearly a hundred.

Doctor. That's all right, then. Now, the question of the marquee.

Mr. Twigg. Well, as I explained to you, I've arranged all that.

Major. When did you explain it? I don't remember.

Doctor. He was telling me just before you came.

Major. Well, that's hardly official, is it?

Mr. Twigg. [Hurriedly.] The position is this: Last year there was a great deal of comment about that tent which Robinsons supplied—it had a thin red stripe in it. You remember I

was instructed this year to make it clear that the tent must be a *white* one—just a plain white. I cycled over to Market Duxford and saw Robinsons—in fact I had a personal interview with Mr. Robinson. He wanted to send us a dreadful black and yellow tent, but I was quite firm, and Robinsons promised that we should have a plain white one.

Major. I can't understand why on earth he didn't realize that—surely, a cricket match——

Doctor. [*Breaking in.*] Anyhow, he clearly understands we're not going to accept a black and yellow one?

Mr. Twigg. Yes, he definitely promised to send a white tent.

Doctor. Very well. That's settled. Now then.
[*He peers at the minute-book.*]

Mr. Twigg. [*Diffidently.*] Well, the next point is—the—er—question of appointing a lady to supervise the tea.

Doctor. [*Sitting back in his chair.*] Yes.

[*There is silence.*]

Mr. Twigg. No name was put forward at the last meeting.

[*There is another silence. Presently the Major begins to fidget. He starts to speak—stops—clears his throat, and begins again.*]

Major. Well, I must say I was rather surprised that no name was suggested at the last meeting. We require a lady with ability to organize.

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

It 's—it 's very difficult to speak on this matter, and I don't want you to think I am disparaging any one else, but there 's one lady who not only *has* that ability, but also the experience. [*He pauses.*] My wife has organized the choir teas for the past ten years. During my service days she frequently helped to organize teas on a very large scale. It 's naturally embarrassing for a man to propose the name of his own wife, but it seems such an obvious selection—yet here we sat for half an hour at the last meeting and no one——

Major. [*Gently breaking in.*] Just a moment, Major. I quite appreciate the loyalty you owe your wife, but you must remember there are certain traditions, and shall I say, courtesies—quite apart from other reasons—that indicate the lady to take charge—— [*He pauses.*]

Major. Well, what are you getting at?

Doctor. I don't understand you. I 'm 'getting at' nothing.

Major. Well, who are you suggesting against my wife?

Doctor. I 'm not suggesting any one 'against' your wife, as you put it. You know quite well the lady I mean. My wife is not only the wife of the president of the club—which in itself clearly indicates her selection—but her own ability places her beyond question as the lady to take charge.

Major. I'm not suggesting a word against your wife—it's simply a question of organizing ability.

Doctor. On what grounds do you question my wife's organizing ability? You said last week how much you enjoyed our garden party.

Major. Certainly. A delightful party. But tea for ten is a very different matter to tea for fifty.

Doctor. It's only a relative matter.

Major. It's a matter of organization.

Doctor. We are not excluding your wife from assisting in the organization.

Major. That's not the point. The point is that the most experienced organizer must have a free hand.

Mr. Twigg. Can't they *both* do it—jointly?

Doctor. [*Taking no notice of Mr. Twigg.*] You ignore the value of prestige—the ability to inspire others to work cheerfully in minor capacities.

Major. So my wife has no prestige? The wife of the captain of the team has no prestige?

Doctor. Don't be silly, Major.

Major. I'm *not* being silly.

Doctor. [*Tapping the table with his pencil.*] Chair, please. [*There is a pause.*] You ignore the traditions and etiquettes which every village like ours naturally observes.

Major. You put worn-out traditions before efficiency?

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Doctor. You still assume, for some extraordinary reason, that your wife is more efficient than mine.

Major. You don't seem to understand. *Experience* is the word I 'm stressing——

Doctor. —of which you have no proof.

Major. I 've got the plainest proof. The choir teas.

[There is a pause. The Doctor clears his throat and speaks.]

Doctor. I 'm sorry, Major Forrester. There are times when, for the good of the village, a man must speak quite frankly. I 've attended more than one of the choir teas. I 've never said a word out of fairness for a keen, voluntary effort—but I have detected a certain lack of—of——

Major. *[Tensely.]* Well, go on——

Doctor. —of, shall I say, inability to understand the needs of a large gathering; an inability to inspire others to work keenly. It's no disparagement to your wife, Major; a woman either has that ability, or she hasn't.

[For a moment there is silence. Then the Major rises, takes up his hat, and goes without a word to the french windows.]

Mr. Twigg. *[In a thin voice.]* Major—where are you going?

Major. *[Quietly.]* I am going to place my resignation as captain of the cricket team in the hands of the General Committee——

Mr. Twigg. [*In dismay.*] But—but you can't!

Major. In future the club will do without the services of my gardener to mow the pitch—nor will it have my own poor services.

Mr. Twigg. But it's impossible—the scandal!

Major. [*With sudden fury.*] You expect me to sit there and listen to insults flung in my wife's face—behind her back!

Mr. Twigg. But, Major, it's—it's terrible; the whole club—the whole village will suffer—do come back!

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] Yes, Major; sit down for a moment. I have something to say.

Major. I'll stand.

[*There is a pause before the Doctor speaks.*]

Doctor. I've been expecting this moment for a long time now. I knew it must come sooner or later. This is no silly, petty quarrel over the ability of two good women. Far deeper issues lie beneath it. For thirty years I've given my all to this village. My medical services, my help on the cricket field, in the social life. I've never spared myself. For ten years I was captain of the cricket team; for twenty I have been its president. I hope I may have done some good, and gained some little respect. Ten years ago, Major Forrester, *you* came to live here. I was the first to call upon you. It was *I* who brought you in touch with the best in the village. When your ambitions turned towards the captaincy of

the Cricket Club, it was I who brought all my influence towards your election. But of late years I have been conscious of something—a kind of barrier growing up between us. Little incidents, the incident over the wicket-keeping gloves last year, the incident last May at the smoking concert; little things in themselves, but danger signals all the same; a studied insolence towards me as president. I am sorry to use those words, Major—studied insolence; a steady endeavour to undermine my prestige——

Major. Now, look here——

Doctor. One moment. I've been forbearing—forbearing to the point of weakness. I sacrificed my pride again and again for the sake of peace. Yet every time I gave way you thought it was weakness; a fear of *you*. I may be growing an old man, but I still have my spirit. You will not resign, Major—you will have the courage to face a General Meeting. We can no longer tolerate this position—one of us two must go. Mr. Twigg will call a General Meeting. You and I will stand before the village, state our case and be judged. If I am defeated, then you will be president and I will retire. I think I am man enough to bear defeat. I will go away from Badger's Green, even though it means the end of the things that matter to me most of all.

[There is a pause. The Major has been standing by the window. He begins to speak quietly,

weighing every word with care, but as he goes on he speaks with increasing warmth.

Major. I knew this would have to come, too. I've seen it coming nearer day by day. You spoke of giving your all to the village. Haven't I given my all too? I came here twelve years ago—you said ten just now, but that's a small point—I gave my heart and soul. I founded the Bowling Club. I saved the Archery Club from extinction; I organized the annual sports on a scale never before dreamed of—and then, at your own request, I turned my energy to the Cricket Club. I became captain. I gave my last ounce of thought and energy to the club—every spare penny. Yet while the committee showed its gratitude, there was always a nagging opposition [*He points straight at the Doctor.*] from *you*, Dr. Wetherby! I would put forward new ideas; the committee were always keen, but they never dared to act without referring to the president. And what did the president do? He pulled my ideas to pieces—said: 'Is it wise?' He treated me like a hot-headed little boy who must be restrained! Of course the committee listened! Because you have been here thirty years they follow you like sheep. If by sheer force I was able to make progress and succeed, they passed a vote of thanks, to *you*! If, because of your nagging opposition, I failed—I was blamed by *you*!

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Doctor. That 'll do, Major!

Major. There you are! 'That 'll do.' It's always 'That 'll do!' when the plain truth begins to come.

Doctor. I've never opposed you. I've merely tried, as an older man, to show you wisdom when I felt you were wrong.

Major. Show me wisdom! Me! With twenty years' Army service! A Major: and you show me wisdom!

Doctor. I've said all I have to say, Major. As president, I decline to accept your resignation from the captaincy; a General Meeting—the whole village—will be asked to judge.

Major. Yes; because you *know* they'll back you up! Because you've vegetated here for thirty years, you *know* they daren't turn you out! Sentiment for an old man!

Doctor. How dare you say that! You are *afraid* to face the village! Because you bluster and try and bully [*He suddenly becomes quiet.*—I'm sorry—I was forgetting myself. Perhaps I *am* too old. It's the day of the younger men. I won't defend myself. I shall simply explain what has happened—and resign.

Mr. Twigg. Oh—but you can't!

Major. There you are. There's Twigg! *He* won't accept your resignation—you know the village won't! Don't you know that *every* village puts sentiment before progress, and goes

wallowing on with old men in charge who are too selfish to resign? That every keen man who tries to drive ahead is suffocated by jealousy?

Doctor. I will not be insulted in my own house! I order you to leave.

Major. [*Furiously.*] I will! Never to return! I shall leave the village to muddle on by itself. But one last word before I go——

[The Major pauses dramatically—but in the pause Dickie Wetherby, the Doctor's son, comes cheerfully through the french windows. He is not much over twenty. He goes over to his father.]

Dickie. I say! Have you seen what's happened? An awful black and yellow striped tent's just arrived! An appalling thing! We can't possibly use it for a big game like Wednesday's!

Mr. Twigg. But I distinctly said a *white* tent. Mr. Robinson promised me personally——

Dickie. Well, we must do something about it quickly. We've only got a couple of days to get it changed. [*He suddenly remembers a letter he is carrying.*] Oh, look here, Mr. Twigg, here's an express letter just arrived for you. I found the postman running round in circles with it. I told him I thought I should find you here.

Mr. Twigg. An *express* letter!

[He examines it all over, and nervously begins to open it.]

Dickie. [*Turning again to his father.*] You know,

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

really, we simply can't use it! The committee's looking at it now. We must have it taken away before they begin to like it. [*He turns and sees the Major standing grimly in the corner.*]

Hullo, Major! How's your cold?

Major. [Stiffly.] My cold's better, thank you.

Dickie. Splendid! Can't have you laid up for the big match. [*He slowly becomes conscious of tension in the air*] I say—I'm sorry—are you having a meeting?

Major. [Coldly.] The meeting's over.

Dickie. Good! I thought I'd butted in. What about having the flag-staff painted? We must look spick and span to meet Ragholt. It'll be a grand game, if the weather holds.

[*Mr. Twigg has been poring over his letter. He looks up, blinking rapidly.*]

Mr. Twigg. This is a most extraordinary thing!

Dickie. What's the trouble?

Mr. Twigg. Well—what's the 'Badger's Green Development Syndicate'?

Dickie. The—what?

Mr. Twigg. The 'Badger's Green Development Syndicate.'

Dickie. What on earth are you talking about?

Mr. Twigg. Well, here's a letter from an old friend of mine, Harry Parker. We were at school together.

Dickie. What's he say?

Mr. Twigg. He says: 'Dear Twiggy,' [*He pauses*

and looks up apologetically.] that's only just a bit of his fun. I used to be called 'Twiggy' in the old days. He says: 'Dear Twiggy,—I expect you know all about the Badger's Green Development Syndicate. In case you don't, I am writing at once, because it seems such a frightful shame. I met a man named Butler last night. He's got a wonderful scheme to develop your village into a bungalow town. He's going to build bungalows by the hundred on the downs all round Badger's Green——'

Dickie. What!

Doctor. Here, give me that! [He takes the letter from Mr. Twigg and reads it with trembling hands. After a moment he looks up and speaks in a low hoarse voice.] Good heavens—the blackguards!

Dickie. [Looking over the Doctor's shoulder.] What on earth is it?

Doctor. Look what he says: '—bungalows by the hundred on the downs all round Badger's Green. He said he would have to cut down most of the pinewood——'

Mr. Twigg. Oh, but surely not the pinewood!

Doctor. [Continuing to read.] 'He's made a preliminary survey——'

Dickie. [Excitedly.] Those were the fellows we saw nosing round here last month! Don't you remember those nasty-looking fat men in bowler hats?

Doctor. [Reading.] 'He's coming down on Tues-

day to start things going. It seems a great pity to spoil such a lovely place. Yours, Harry.' Who's Harry?

Mr. Twigg. Harry Parker. An awfully nice man. [*He sighs and shakes his head.*] He must be getting on now.

Dickie. He's coming Tuesday! To-morrow!

Doctor. Look at this leaflet! 'The Badger's Green Development Syndicate is purchasing a large stretch of country round this beautiful little show place——' [*He looks up and repeats hoarsely 'show place.'*] —'perfectly constructed bungalows will be erected on the estate, with every modern convenience. The enclosed plan shows the projected lay-out——' The unutterable blackguards! Fancy having this profane leaflet published without consulting us!

Dickie. Where's the plan?

Doctor. Here it is. [*He unfolds a bright pink plan, and studies it with Dickie looking over his shoulder.*]

Dickie. [*Pointing.*] Look! Bungalows! Rows and rows of bungalows—all round here!

[The Major has slowly emerged from his dark corner and is now looking over the Doctor's shoulder.]

Major. What are all those little blue squares along the end of my garden?

Doctor. Those are bungalows. Thousands of bungalows.

Major. Bungalows at the end of my garden!

Doctor. Look here! A golf course! On Tupney Downs! Look! Cinema and Dance Hall!

Major. What's this just opposite my house? Number six.

[The Doctor feverishly searches the key plan at the bottom.]

Doctor. Number six—where's number six? Here we are! Number six—Sanitary Laundry!

Major. *[Wild-eyed.]* A Sanitary Laundry in front of my house! Not while there's breath in my body!

Doctor. Look here! In Johnson's meadow—Site for Electric Generating Station.

Dickie. *[Pointing to the plan.]* Look! Car Park!

Doctor. *[In a trembling voice.]* Japanese Tea Garden!

Dickie. Stand for charabancs.

Doctor. Look at this! 'Old Village Green. To be left in its present condition.'

Major. Hoh! That's obliging of him!

Mr. Twigg. What's he going to build opposite my house?

Dickie. A sewage farm, most likely.

Mr. Twigg. Well, if he does—I'll—I'll blow it up!

Major. *[Wheeling on Mr. Twigg.]* You've said the word! We'll blow it up! We'll blow the whole damn thing up!

Doctor. Wait just a moment. We must think.

Major. Think! Think—when he's coming down to-morrow to ruin the village! There's no time to *think*! It's time to act!

Doctor. But we must act with thought. [*He pauses.*] I don't think any of us quite realize yet—what this means.

Major. We'll kick the devil out!

Doctor. I can hardly believe that Sir John would sell those downs.

Major. What does he care? He never lives here.

Mr. Twigg. Well, he might have given *us* a thought.

[*There is a moment's pause. Then the Doctor speaks, his voice is tense and quiet.*]

Doctor. Are you prepared to fight?

Major. Fight! Thank God I'm not too old to fight yet!

Doctor. —to fight what may be a hard and difficult battle?

Major. To the end!

Doctor. Would the village back us if we fought?

Major. To a man!

Doctor. We shall not only be fighting for our homes; we shall be fighting for our honour against a contemptuous insult. To think any man dare lay out this scheme behind our backs—to carve up our village and make this plan!

Major. We'll chuck him out neck and crop!

Doctor. Wait a minute. It might be fatal to do anything hasty and ill-considered. We must

meet him for what he is—a crafty business man. We must fight him with his own weapons. Physical violence might be a great mistake.

Major. It's the only thing he'd understand.

Doctor. We must only use violence in extremity.

We'll rouse the village to fight, but keep a firm hand on it until it's necessary to let go.

When he comes, we shall ask him to meet us.

You and I, Major, and Mr. Twigg will meet him shoulder to shoulder. We three men represent

Badger's Green as no other men do — *our* decision is the *village* decision. We shall tell

this man we refuse to allow him to build here.

We shall order him to cancel his plans and leave.

Major. To think of the pinewoods being hacked down!

Doctor. We mustn't allow details to dominate our plans.

Major. Details! You call the pinewood a detail?

Doctor. We must keep the broad principles in mind and fight clearly—we must begin at once; every obstacle must be put in his way——

Major. What about a few good sharp nails in the road?

Doctor. I've said we must reserve physical force until moral force has failed. Dickie! Go down to the 'Blue Boar,' and tell Mr. Rogers that if a stranger comes he must refuse him food and drink. Tell him I'll make up the loss.

Dickie. [*Going to the windows.*] Righto!

BADGER'S GREEN

Act I.

Major. And if you see that new policeman explain the whole thing to him, and tell him to do something about it.

Dickie. [Going out.] Right!

[There is a pause. The Doctor and the Major are facing one another.]

Doctor. If this man wins, it means the end of all our work—of all we 've tried to do for Badger's Green.

Major. He won't win!

Doctor. He can't—if we stick together——

Major. —and fight together——

Doctor. We 've not a moment to lose.

Major. Well—let 's *act*! What shall we do first?

Doctor. Well—let me see——

Major. I know! I 'll go down to the 'Blue Boar' and have a mass meeting. You go and get the Vicar going.

Doctor. No; we 'll keep the Vicar in reserve. I 'll come with you to the 'Blue Boar.' We 'll *both* speak.

Major. Well—don't let 's waste time.

[They go out together, talking.]

Doctor. It 's an insult to the whole village!

Major. I 've never heard anything like it! We 'll soon have the village up in arms!

[Their indignant voices die away. Mr. Twigg is alone. He is sitting at the table deep in thought, his arms resting upon his open minute-book.]

Mary comes in with a white cloth and a plate of bread and butter. She pauses, surprised to see Mr. Twigg there alone.

Mary. Will you be staying to tea, sir?

Mr. Twigg. [*Starts, and looks embarrassed.*] Oh—er—no, Mary. I don't think I shall be staying—
[*There is a pause.*]

Mary. Would you mind my laying the cloth, sir?

Mr. Twigg. Er—yes—do!

[*He gathers up his minute-book, and goes slowly towards the windows with the book under his arm. Mary lays the cloth and turns. Her eye falls upon Mr. Twigg's letter, which lies on the carpet where it has been dropped by the Doctor. She picks it up.*]

Mary. Is this your letter, sir?

Mr. Twigg. Oh—yes—thanks, [*He looks up at Mary and smiles rather proudly.*] an express letter. [*He turns and goes slowly towards the windows.*]

Mary. [*Picking up his panama hat from chair.*] Your hat, sir.

Mr. Twigg. [*Smiling.*] Oh, thanks. [*He goes down the garden path.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS



SCENE I

The library of Dr. Wetherby's house towards twelve o'clock next morning.

The Doctor and the Major, looking very important in morning coats, are supervising Dickie and Mr. Twigg, who are struggling to get a table through the door. Dickie is pulling; Mr. Twigg, at present out of sight in the passage, is pushing. The Major is holding an inkpot and some blotting-paper to put on the table when it is through the door.

Doctor. Don't pull it! Ease it gently. It's no good trying to force it.

Mr. Twigg. [*Outside in the passage.*] Try tilting it a bit.

Dickie. That's no good. You can't get the legs through like that.

Major. Try lifting it a bit.

Mr. Twigg. I can't lift it.

Major. You've got the leg caught in the carpet. If only you'd lift it.

Mr. Twigg. [*Petulantly.*] I tell you, I can't lift it.

Major. Of course you can.

Mr. Twigg. Well, come and try yourself. Give it a twist, Dickie——

[Dickie gives it a twist, but it becomes more firmly wedged.]

Dickie. It's absolutely stuck.

Major. What on earth are we going to do if he comes now?

Doctor. It's all right. It's no use getting excited. It's only ten minutes to. We must get it right back and start again.

Major. Well, we'd better buck up. If only he'd lift the damn thing.

Doctor. Get it back into the passage, Mr. Twigg.

Mr. Twigg. It won't come.

Doctor. Push it, Dickie. *[Dickie pushes.]*

Dickie. It's no good.

Major. Lift your end, Twigg.

Mr. Twigg. I'm certain you can do it if you give it a twist.

Dickie. I have given it a twist.

Mr. Twigg. Not a proper twist.

Major. Well, come and do it yourself—if you know——

Mr. Twigg. I've had tables get stuck like this before.

Major. Well, that doesn't help if you can't do anything.

Mr. Twigg. I can't from here.

Major. Well, come and do it this side.

Mr. Twigg. I'll soon show you what I mean.

[Mr. Twigg comes crawling over the table—but only his head has appeared before the Doctor calls out.]

Doctor. Don't do *that*! You'll press it down firmer—get under!

Mr. Twigg. I can't get under.

Doctor. Well, go round, then.

[Mr. Twigg's head disappears. The Major and the Doctor are obviously restless and ill at ease.]

Major. I don't know why we couldn't have used this one. *[He fingers the small, round table they used the previous day for the committee meeting.]*

Doctor. How *can* we meet him at a silly little table like that? He'd laugh at us.

Major. Well, how's he going to get in if we can't move that one?

Doctor. We shan't see him till we are ready. I intend to keep him waiting in any case. I've told Mary to show him into the breakfast-room.

Major. We ought to have measured it before we tried to get it through.

Doctor. We've had it in here before—lots of times.

[Mr. Twigg has come round by the front door, and hurries in through the french windows. He also is wearing a morning coat, with spats.]

Mr. Twigg. I'm certain it only wants a quick twist, and a pull——

Major. Well, do it!

[Mr. Twigg goes to the table, and gives it a little twist. In some way he has released it, for he is able to pull it into the room.]

Mr. Twigg. *[His face wreathed in smiles.]* There you are.

Major. Well, for goodness' sake don't stand there smirking.

Mr. Twigg. I don't know why you couldn't have done that.

Major. Well—buck up—what's the time?

Doctor. *[Consulting his watch.]* Six minutes to. Now then, bring it across here.

[Dickie and Mr. Twigg carry the table over to the fire-place, followed by the Doctor.]

Major. *[Rubbing the door-frame with his finger.]* He's taken all your paint off. What a clumsy fellow he is!

Doctor. *[Directing.]* That's right—a little away from the wall, so that we can get in and out. Now, Major! The ink and blotting-paper.

[The Major steps forward smartly and puts the ink and blotting-paper on the table. He then stands back and looks at the table critically.]

Major. I should have the table broadside to the door, so that when he comes in you and I and Twigg will be sitting facing him—shoulder to shoulder.

Mr. Twigg. That 's a good idea. Facing him—shoulder to shoulder.

[They move the table accordingly and stand back to look at it.]

Doctor. No, I don't think so. It looks too formal. Too much like a tribunal.

Mr. Twigg. Yes, it *does* look rather like a tribunal.

Major. Well, it is a tribunal, isn't it?

Doctor. Hardly a tribunal. We don't want him to think we 're seriously concerned. Just sit along behind it—I 'll have a look. *[The Major, Mr. Twigg, and Dickie get chairs, and sit along behind the table. The Doctor looks critically for a moment, then goes out of the door and returns to get the effect.]* No, it 's too formal—too grim. It would flatter him, and make him think we were afraid of him. Bring it round a bit—that 's better. *[They move the table a little.]* It looks more casual if we sit like that. It 'll make him feel he 's just a passing nuisance.

Mr. Twigg. A pen. There 's no pen! What about a pen?

Doctor. *[Quietly.]* All right. Don't get excited. Dickie, a pen. *[Dickie brings a pen from the desk.]* After all, it is only a small affair. We 've all faced bigger troubles than this.

Major. Good God, yes! What 's the time?

Doctor. I make it—just four minutes to.

Major. We 'd better buck up.

Doctor. I think we 're practically ready. *[He*

pauses and looks thoughtfully at the table.] Oh, I know—a bottle of water and a glass. [*He goes to the door and calls.*] Mary!

Dickie. What about chairs? I suppose you 'll let him sit down?

Doctor. Oh, yes. Certainly he can sit down if he wants to. We shall want — let 's see — four chairs for ourselves, five altogether—or do you think his secretary will come too?

Dickie. Certain to, I should think. Probably a dictaphone and a couple of typewriters as well.
[Mary comes in.]

Mary. Did you call, sir?

Doctor. Yes, Mary. I want you to bring the water-bottle down off my washhand-stand. See that it's *full*, with a clean glass over the top—as quickly as possible.

Mary. Yes, sir. *[She goes out.]*

Doctor. Now, let 's see—what were we doing?
[He thinks.] Oh, chairs. The secretary can sit on this one. [*He pulls forward the chair from his desk.*] Now we only want one for Mr. Butler. Bring one out of the hall, Dickie.

Dickie. Which one?

Doctor. Oh, the—er—hard one.

Dickie. Righto. *[Dickie goes out.]*

Major. Don't you think a soft one? If we make him feel at ease, we might catch him off his guard.

Doctor. No, it 's morally wrong to do that. We

must fight fair! Now then! [*He looks at the table and thinks.*]

Major. What about a few sheets of paper, for notes, etc.?

Doctor. Yes—on my desk, Mr. Twigg.

Mr. Twigg. One sheet before each?

Doctor. Yes, and a few extra sheets in the middle of the table. [*Mr. Twigg gets the paper and places a sheet before each chair.*] Don't you think we ought to have a few books of reference?

Major. No. Clear table—a clear hand. Napoleon never had anything but an inkpot on his table.

Mr. Twigg. He must have had a pen.

Major. Of course he had a pen! What do you think?

[*The Doctor breaks in as Dickie arrives with a chair.*]

Doctor. Ah! Come along, Dickie. [*Taking the chair.*] Now then—three behind the table. [*He gives directions.*] My arm-chair in the centre—that's right. Mr. Butler can sit here—so [*He places the chair in the centre of the room.*]—and his secretary here. [*He moves a chair slightly behind Mr. Butler's chair.*]

Dickie. Where do I sit?

Doctor. Oh, just here. [*He places the other chair slightly behind those at the table.*] You can be my secretary, Dickie. You jot down agenda, memoranda, etc., and don't you talk too much.

Mr. Twigg. [*Fingering the chair in the centre.*]
Don't you think Mr. Butler might sit just a little——

Doctor. [*Sharply.*] Leave it alone.

Mr. Twigg. [*Letting go quickly.*] I'm sorry.

Doctor. What's the good of arranging things if you interfere? I know perfectly well where Mr. Butler ought to sit.

Mr. Twigg. Well, I only thought——

Doctor. Well, for goodness' sake don't be a nuisance. We've quite enough to do as it is.

[*He looks anxiously at his watch.*]

Dickie. I suppose I can join in and say something now and then?

Doctor. I'd rather you didn't, Dickie. This matter requires very careful handling—discretion's not your strong point, you know. We're going to meet an artful business man.

Major. What do you make the time?

Doctor. Two minutes to.

Major. Well, that girl had better buck up. It surely doesn't take half an hour to fetch a water-bottle?

Doctor. Yes, where is that lazy girl? [*He goes to the door and meets Mary coming in.*] Come along, come along. Now just in the middle of the table, Mary—slightly to the right—so that it's beside my elbow when I lean over the table. That'll show that I'm the—er—principal person. [*He turns to Mary.*] Now you under-

stand exactly what to do when Mr. Butler arrives? Ask for his card, and inquire whether he has an appointment. Then usher him into the morning-room. Give him *The Times* to read; then come and tell me he is here. I shall instruct you to go to him and say I am engaged for the moment, but won't keep him long. You will then wait until I ring the bell. You will then usher him in.

Mary. Yes, sir.

Doctor. Very well. Thank you, Mary.

Mary. I give him *The Times* to read, sir?

Doctor. Yes, here you are. [*He takes 'The Times' from his desk, and gives it to Mary.*]

Major. Wouldn't it be better if she gave him *The Times* when she goes back to say you're engaged? That would look as if he'd got longer to wait.

Doctor. All right, Mary, thank you.

Mary. When shall I give it 'im, sir?

Doctor. As I explained to you. [*Mary goes out, a little mystified. The Doctor turns coldly to the Major.*] I do wish you wouldn't contradict me in front of my servants, Major.

Major. Well, surely, a suggestion.

Doctor. I prefer to consider suggestions in private.

Mr. Twigg. Don't you want the pink plan? You arranged to tear it up in front of him.

Doctor. Er—yes—the plan—where is it?

[*They search feverishly for the plan.*]

Major. We had it here last night.

Dickie. It ought to be easy enough to find—it's bright enough.

Doctor. In the drawing-room, Dickie. I was looking at it after breakfast. Quick! Before he comes! [*Dickie rushes off to get the plan*]

Major. It must have gone twelve.

Doctor. Only just. We're all ready now, I think.

Mr. Twigg. Can we smoke at the meeting?

Doctor. Certainly not.

Major. Good heavens, no!

[*Dickie arrives with the plan.*]

Doctor. Ah, Dickie, on the table. No; I'll bring it out of my pocket at the right moment. [*As he puts it in his pocket, the Major, who has wandered to the window, gives an exclamation.*]

Major. Here they come!

Mr. Twigg. [*Running to the window.*] Where?

Doctor. Don't let them see you looking!

Major. Is that the secretary?

Dickie. [*Looking over the Major's shoulder.*] It must be.

Major. By jove, she's a nice looking girl.

[*The Doctor, despite himself, is drawn to the window, and looks on tiptoe over the Major's shoulder. Then he collects himself and comes away.*]

Doctor. Major! Mr. Twigg! Do, please, come away.

[*Mr. Twigg slinks away from the window, the Major remains peering out.*]

Major. Well, she is a winner.

Doctor. Major!

Major. All right. You're getting jumpy. [*He comes sulkily away from the window.*]

Dickie. He's not such a bad-looking chap.

Doctor. It's absurd to let him see you all staring at him.

Dickie. He can't see us.

[They all shrink back a little as a man, followed by a girl with an attaché case, passes near the windows on the way round to the front door. The bell rings. They all start slightly.]

Mr. Twigg. There they are!

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] All right—we know. Keep calm. If he sees you're excited and flustered it'll make it harder for us.

Mr. Twigg. Where do I sit?

Doctor. [*Pointing to the chair at the right of the table.*] There!

Major. I should have thought I ought to be on your right.

Doctor. All right, then. Mr. Twigg, you sit there—on the left.

Mr. Twigg. [*Touching the seat.*] Here?

Doctor. Yes. [*Mary comes in.*] Yes, Mary?

Mary. A gentleman to see you, sir. With a lady.

[Mary gives a card to the Doctor. He reads it and looks over his glasses at Mary.]

Doctor. Very well, Mary. Tell him I'm engaged for the moment, but I shall be able to see him presently.

Mary. Very good, sir.

Doctor. Did you give him *The Times*?

Mary. No, sir. 'E took it. [She goes out.]

Major. He would.

Doctor. [Pondering over the card.] Herbert William Butler, address in High Holborn—as I thought. [He looks up and speaks briskly.] Now—we are absolutely clear? Is there any point of any kind we are not decided on?

Major. Flat refusal.

Doctor. Certainly. We don't know how he will attack. We must be ready to parry every blow.

Mr. Twigg. When are you going to tear up the plan before his eyes?

Doctor. At the end of my first speech. Now then—are we all ready?

Major. Yes.

[The Doctor takes the handbell and rings it.]

Doctor. [Pointing at the bell.] Butler's death knell!

[He laughs a little wildly.] Sit down.

[They seat themselves as arranged. There is silence. Soon Mary pushes open the door, says: 'Mr. Butler and—lady.' Mr. Butler comes briskly in, followed by his Secretary. He is a tall, pleasant man.]

Mr. Butler. Doctor Wetherby? [He pauses.] Oh,

I'm sorry. Am I interrupting a meeting of some kind?

[The Doctor rises and speaks with care.]

Doctor. No, sir. I must introduce myself. I am Dr. Wetherby, the gentleman on my right is Major Forrester; on my left is Mr. Twigg. We take a very keen interest in this village. We protect it. We understand you have something to say.

Mr. Butler. *[Somewhat embarrassed.]* Well—er—

Doctor. Will you sit down, sir? *[He motions to the other chair.]* That chair is for your secretary.

[Mr. Butler, the Doctor, and the Girl sit down.]

Mr. Butler. Well, I really only wanted a little informal chat, Dr. Wetherby.

Doctor. Information has fallen into our hands, Mr. Butler, that makes us feel this is *not* a matter for an informal chat.

Major. Hear! Hear!

Doctor. We have seen your plans.

Mr. Butler. Oh, you have? Good! Well, perhaps you'd like me to go into the scheme and explain it. I'm not a jerry-builder, or anything like that. I've got a big scheme to provide houses in the country for people of moderate means. If a man wants to live in the country at present, he's either got to take a big house he can't afford, or else a little cottage without any convenience at all. I'm going to supply just

what he wants—something between the two. Nice little houses, close together to be friendly; with electric light, and gas, and water, and sporting facilities. I've picked on this place because it's just right. Decent healthy woods—chalk soil—pleasant outlook. I'm buying up a lot of land round here. Naturally it's going to mean a lot to your village. It's going to open things up, and bring money into your shops. You see, when I've finished building, you'll be right in the middle of it.

Doctor. Is that all you have to say?

Mr. Butler. Well, I thought we might put our heads together. I think we can help each other quite a lot, you know.

[The Doctor rises again.]

Doctor. It was only yesterday, by chance, we heard of your plans. It's a great pity you didn't consult us before you began. We could have saved you a lot of time and trouble.

Mr. Butler. Oh, I don't think you could have helped much at first—we had to do the surveying and all that.

Doctor. I don't think I mentioned the word 'help,' Mr. Butler. I mean we could have saved you the trouble of starting. Certain papers fell into our hands yesterday; they explained all we require to know. It is your intention to vandalize our village—to build crude places of amusement——

BADGER'S GREEN

Act II. Sc. i.

Mr. Butler. Oh, but I 'm not going to put up any eyesores!

Major. Are you going to tell us that a Steam Sanitary Laundry isn't an eyesore?

Mr. Butler. It depends on the way it 's built. You 'd hardly know the one I 'm going to build *was* a laundry.

Doctor. I must make things quite clear, Mr. Butler. We are not objecting to progress. We encourage progress in the right direction. We are not country yokels; but we do know sufficient of the world to keep a few corners of it clean. We met last night and decided unanimously to forbid your building here.

Mr. Butler. Oh, but I say! You can't do that!

Doctor. From a strictly legal point of view we can't. But if you try and build bungalows on these downs, the hand of every man, woman, dog, and cat in this village will be against you.

Mr. Butler. Well, that 's absurd!

Doctor. You will see whether it is absurd. When a whole village rises up in protest, no one can avoid the consequences. You may find the wheels will come off your brick-wagons, your scaffolding may collapse in the night; rubbish may choke your drains——

Mr. Butler. What about the police?

Doctor. Police-constable Parsons will help as far as his other duties allow.

Mr. Butler. Well, if I was interfered with like

that, I should have to go and see the magistrate.
Doctor. I am the magistrate. It's useless to argue further. We're busy men; we have other appointments this morning. We've no more time to give you.

Mr. Twigg. [*In a hoarse whisper to the Doctor.*]

The plan! What about the plan?

Doctor. What? Oh, yes. [*He gropes quickly in his pocket and addresses Mr. Butler.*] Among other papers that fell into our hands yesterday was this [*He flourishes the plan from his pocket.*]—a plan of your scheme to vandalize our village. This, Mr. Butler, is what I think of your plan——

[He takes hold of it to tear it across, but evidently it is made of very tough fabric, for it will not tear. The Doctor tugs hard without result.]

Mr. Butler. [*Turning to his Secretary.*] Make a note to order some more of that plan paper. Good stuff!

Major. [*To the Doctor in an undertone.*] Try tearing the other way.

[The Doctor, quivering with anger, turns the plan and tries again. It gives with a harsh, ripping sound. The Doctor throws the pieces aside.]

Doctor. That, Mr. Butler, is what I think of your plan. And the whole village thinks the same.

Mr. Butler. I don't think the whole village does.

I was talking to the landlord of the 'Blue Boar' this morning. He's all out for my scheme; he sees what it's going to mean to him. I left him planning out a big dining-room, and a lot of bedrooms. He's going to turn his old stables into a garage.

Doctor. [*Aghast.*] Rogers!

Mr. Twigg. Oh, but it can't be Rogers!

Mr. Butler. [*Nodding.*] Mr. Rogers, of the 'Blue Boar.' [*There is a pause before Mr. Butler speaks again.*] Do you really think it fair to prevent him adding ten pounds a week to his income?

Doctor. [*With sudden wrath.*] We are the men who look after Badger's Green—not the inn-keeper! You've had our decision. We are determined to oppose your scheme. [*He turns to the Major.*] Do you agree, Major?

Major. Certainly!

Doctor. Mr. Twigg?

Mr. Twigg. [*Starting slightly.*] Er—yes. Absolutely.

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] I think that ends the matter, Mr. Butler.

[There is a pause. Mr. Butler gives a slight shrug, and rises as if to go.]

Mr. Butler. Well, gentlemen, I must say it's a big disappointment. I was hoping a lot of good might have come out of this talk. Most building schemes in the country go wrong because there's no link between the old people and the

new. A builder just comes along and puts up a lot of houses; the people who buy them never get a chance of understanding the country and taking a pride in it, because there's nobody to show them! They never get to know the village people. They generally get up against them, and everybody's miserable.

Doctor. Exactly! 'Everybody's miserable.' So why do it?

Mr. Butler. Because no one's tried doing it the right way. I know it's difficult, but I think you gentlemen could have done it. You see the enormous possibilities of it? The villagers down here would do anything for you. I could see that this morning. You understand them absolutely. But the great point is you are not villagers yourselves. You are men of the world. You would understand these new people just as you understand the villagers; you could bring the old and new together. The village would still be Badger's Green; it would be three times as big, but it would still have the same spirit if you kept a guiding hand. You would get that marvellous energy that comes from blending the best of the old with the best of the new.

Doctor. It may be all right in theory, Mr. Butler—but in practice—— [*He smiles and shakes his head.*]

Mr. Butler. Why shouldn't it be done?

Doctor. It's never happened before.

Mr. Butler. Because the right men have never come forward to do it. *I* couldn't do it—I don't know the village people. None of the villagers could do it—they wouldn't understand the newcomers. *You* are the only men who could do it, because you understand the outlook of both sides. [*He pauses.*] It would have been a fine thing to have done. A unique thing. [*He pauses. There is silence until he proceeds.*] Take just one point. The question of health, Doctor. What you could have done for people who've had years of indoor work. They'd get a new lease of life if they were shown the way to make the most of the open air. I was hoping you would advise me as to the healthiest positions to build. I wanted to have a little hospital somewhere down in the valley. I hoped you would have advised me in fitting it up. I thought perhaps you would supervise it. It wouldn't have meant a lot of your time if we had good nurses in charge; but it would have meant a lot to these people if you gave them the same care that you give these villagers. [*He pauses.*] I do hope you'll think it over, Doctor, and see if you can reconsider it. [*The Doctor makes no reply. He sits deep in thought. Mr. Butler turns to the Major.*] Then there's the question of sport. You've got to get people keen, and there's only one way to do that. You've got to find a real organizer to lead

them. I want to lay out a golf course—tennis, bowls, hockey—good healthy games; and I want the right team spirit. It's only a leader who can bring team spirit—and leaders are not easy to find. You can understand why I got excited when I heard people talking in the village about the way the games are run down here. I knew there must be a pretty good organizer behind the village sports to get through a programme of thirty races in two hours.

Major. Twenty minutes out of that was the tea interval.

Mr. Butler. You got through a whole programme in an hour and forty minutes?

Major. There's nothing in that—if you know what you're doing.

Mr. Butler. Then why do most sports meetings drag on till it's dark?

Major. Because there's no proper organization. Generally there's half a dozen people trying to run the thing.

Mr. Butler. Exactly! They can't trust one man to do it; they generally have stupid little committees that squabble all the time. You see what I mean, Major? If we had one real leader to organize the whole sports, we might do anything! Look what you do at present with a handful of people; then think of having three times as many to select your teams from. We

might send tennis players to Wimbledon—men from the Bowling Club might play for the county. We should have to see that the small routine work didn't fall on your shoulders. Each club would have its own secretary, and you would organize and run the whole thing.

Major. You wouldn't want a secretary for each club. If you combined golf and tennis in one club, and bowls and hockey in another, you could run the whole thing with two secretaries, and probably save twenty or thirty pounds a year.

[Mr. Butler throws out his hands in a gesture of admiration.]

Mr. Butler. There you are!

Major. The golf course could be in the valley—and the Club House on the spur of Tupney Downs. The whole course would be in view from there.

Mr. Butler. A splendid idea! *[He turns to his Secretary.]* Make a note of that.

[The Major leans forward impressively, and repeats the gist of his suggestion slowly but crisply, for the Secretary's benefit.]

Major. Golf—in valley. *[Pause.]* Club House—spur Tupney Downs *[Pause.]*—whole course—thereby—in view——

[The Doctor, who has been lost in thought, gradually becomes aware of the Major's words. He turns to him.]

Doctor. As we decline to help Mr. Butler, why make suggestions?

Major. Well, damn it——

Mr. Butler. [*Breaking in.*] But, Doctor, I did hope you 'd give the matter consideration——

Doctor. [*Breaking in quietly.*] We may have judged you a little hastily, Mr. Butler; but our duty lies in protecting Badger's Green.

Mr. Butler. But I'm not going to touch the village!

Major. I think a man ought to do all he can for other people.

Mr. Butler. If someone in the village were very ill—don't you think a hospital near by would be very valuable?

Doctor. There's a serious fault in your plan there, Mr. Butler. The chief troubles of city workers are traceable to the lungs. The valley is damp, but it's dry on the ridge, and the pinewoods have a natural curative property——

[There is a pause before the Major indignantly breaks in.]

Major. Oh, no, you don't! D'you think we're going to have a nasty-looking hospital on the spur of Tupney Downs, in full view of the golf and tennis? No, thank you! You put your hospital in that field behind the churchyard and save transport!

Doctor. [*Icily.*] Is illness a theme for lewd jokes?

Major. [*Laughing.*] Well—damn it——

Doctor. Is golf considered before the sick?

Major. *Certainly!* Health comes first every time. You leave Tupney Downs alone. I'm not going to have a smell of iodine on the golf links to oblige you!

Doctor. If I decide that a hospital shall be built on the spur, it *shall* be on the spur!

Mr. Butler. [*Hastily.*] I think I know a fine place! You know where the pines slope into the valley over there? [*He waves a hand.*—why not make a clearing and have the hospital right in the woods?

Doctor. We might do that! It would be good to have a kind of sun-trap, open towards the south. [*He pauses.*] I know the place—where's that plan? [*He takes the plan out of the fireplace and pieces it together. Mr. Butler comes over, and the three of them pore over the map.*] Look! just here! Cut away the trees a bit, and you've got your view.

Major. Yes, but the Golf Club House will be here. The first green would be right in your damn sun-trap.

Doctor. [*Angrily.*] Will you understand once and for all that sports will not be considered until the hospital site has been selected!

Major. [*Almost shouting.*] Now, look here, I've had quite enough of your stupid, selfish ideas!

Doctor. [*Breaking in, white with fury.*] And so have I of yours! If we have any more trouble

from you, Mr. Butler and I will dispense with your services altogether and get a more reasonable man to organize the sports. Don't you agree, Mr. Butler?

Major. Well! If that isn't the ruddy limit!

Mr. Butler. I do hope we can arrange things so that everybody's satisfied.

Major. I'm always prepared to give and take. But I do resent your attitude. I'm not a child.

Doctor. No one suggested you were.

Major. Any one would think so by the way you talk to me.

Doctor. [*Calm again.*] Well, there's no need to have a scene. We'll do our best to meet one another fairly.

Mr. Butler. That's fine.

Major. You can rely upon me to be reasonable—but I certainly shan't undertake a responsible job like this without a free hand.

Doctor. [*Poring over the plan again.*] There's a point here, Mr. Butler—you've got a children's playground marked—but there are far too many trees round it. There's a much more open place just here, where you get the sun all day. Don't you think so, Major? This field at the bottom of Mr. Twigg's garden—it only means taking Twigg's chicken-run away.

Major. Yes, that's all right. It'd be a great improvement on Twigg's chicken-run. It smells terribly in the summer. He never cleans it out.

BADGER'S GREEN

Act II. Sc. i.

Doctor. Come outside, Mr. Butler; I can point out where I mean.

[The Doctor busily gathers up the two pieces of the plan and goes towards the door with the Major and Mr. Butler. Mr. Twigg has been sitting quite still with a look of bewilderment on his face. He suddenly jumps to his feet as he sees the others leaving. He is quivering with excitement.]

Mr. Twigg. Well, I never heard anything like it in all my life!

Major. Like what?

Mr. Twigg. *[Almost sobbing with indignation.]* Like *what*, you say! Why, like you! Didn't we have a meeting last night for three hours? Didn't we make up our minds to kick him out? And now look what you've done?

Major. What on earth are you shouting about? Can't you see the whole position's changed? We didn't realize Mr. Butler's intentions last night. We only knew half the story.

Mr. Twigg. We knew everything! We knew he wanted to build a lot of ugly bungalows! And now you just give in—just because he soft-soaps you!

Major. *[Angrily.]* What a fool you are! Can't you see an inch before your nose?

Mr. Twigg. I can see a long way farther than you can! You're turncoats! That's what you are!

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] There's no need for bad language, Mr. Twigg.

Major. He's mad.

[Dickie can keep quiet no longer.]

Dickie. Are you sure you are doing the right thing, father?

Major. Look there! Your own son now!

Doctor. I asked you not to interfere, Dickie.

[Mr. Butler gently takes the Doctor's arm, and draws him out into the garden; the Doctor glances back, half appealing, half indignant, at his son. The Major pauses before following the others into the garden, draws himself up, and throws a few last words at Dickie.]

Major. When you're a little older, my boy, you'll learn that the greatest test of courage is to change your mind when you realize you're wrong.

[He goes with dignity into the garden. Dickie and Mr. Twigg are staring after him. The Girl sits quietly in her chair. Dickie turns to Mr. Twigg.]

Dickie. Look here, I'm not going to stand for this! Don't you see how he's done it?

Mr. Twigg. Soft soap!

Dickie. He's done it by flattery—he's got round them by a trick!

Mr. Twigg. Well, he didn't get round *me*!

Dickie. [*Pausing and turning to the Girl.*] I'm awfully sorry about all this.

The Girl. [Smiling.] That 's all right.

[*Dickie turns to Mr. Twigg.*]

Dickie. He 's turned them round his finger! He 's heard the Major was keen on sport, and offers a lot of impossible things. He knows my father would do anything for the village, so he promises a hospital! If he 'd known you kept chickens he 'd have built you a poultry farm!

Mr. Twigg. [Helplessly.] Yes, but what can we do?

Dickie. I 'm going to shove my word in now; as hard as I damn well can!

[*He strides determinedly out of the windows.*]

The Girl rises; Mr. Twigg turns back into the room and speaks to her.

Mr. Twigg. Did you ever hear anything like it—in all your life! Here we sat for hours and hours last night and kept on agreeing to fight together—and now look what 's happened!

The Girl. I do understand—exactly—how you feel!

Mr. Twigg. [Suspiciously.] Yes, but surely——

The Girl. I know. I 'm Mr. Butler's secretary——

Mr. Twigg. Then we 're—we 're against each other.

The Girl. We may be on the surface. But I 'm certain we feel the same underneath. We both want to keep the country as it is; but development 's bound to come; nobody can stop it. Isn't it rather a question of making the best of it—of seeing that it 's done carefully?

Mr. Twigg. It's these ugly bungalows I can't stand.

The Girl. But they're not ugly. They're specially designed to suit the country.

Mr. Twigg. Well—I—I can't help that.

The Girl. London gets worse to live in every year, and people want the country more. It's rather rough on them to find the country people against them.

Mr. Twigg. But look at the bottles and paper, and—bits of pie they throw about.

The Girl. Those are the people who don't live in the country; they just come for the day. If they lived here they wouldn't do that sort of thing.

Mr. Twigg. I'm glad you—you feel like I do about things.

The Girl. If we can make people really comfortable out here, they'll take a pride in the country. Don't you think we could plan out ways of making people keen on country life? When I saw you out on the Green this morning, I thought how much you could help in that way.

Mr. Twigg. Did you—see me?

The Girl. Wasn't it you—with a butterfly net?

Mr. Twigg. Well, yes. I was out this morning. I—I didn't know any one saw me. Some people think it's rather silly.

The Girl. I don't see why. People don't think fishing silly, or hunting or shooting.

Mr. Twigg. That 's just what I always think.

The Girl. It 's not nearly so cruel, either.

Mr. Twigg. I don't do it in any way out of blood lust. I do it as a study. I always carry a lethal box and drop them straight in. They don't suffer any pain. I always keep it rather secret. The Major laughs and makes jokes about it in front of me at parties.

The Girl. He doesn't understand.

Mr. Twigg. I 'm glad you think like that. [*There is a pause. Mr. Twigg seems embarrassed and agitated.*] You know—you 're not a bit like most girls.

The Girl. [*Laughing.*] I 'm sure I am.

Mr. Twigg. You 're not, really. Most girls with ideas like yours are plain.

The Girl. Oh, but——

Mr. Twigg. [*Hastily.*] No, really—I mean it! You 're so different. [*He stops and goes on nervously.*] D' you feel a—a sort of sympathy between us?

The Girl. Don't you?

Mr. Twigg. Er—yes; I—I do. I felt it directly you came in. I always feel rather—lonely about the country. You see I was born here, but I had to take over my father's business in the city. I—I didn't like it really; so I came back here.

The Girl. It would be splendid if we could work together and make people understand. Couldn't

we arrange a series of talks about country life?

Mr. Twigg. Do you think they 'd really care?

The Girl. Wouldn't you care—to have your eyes opened to lovely things? We could give talks in the evenings; and the next afternoon we could take them for a ramble.

Mr. Twigg. And I could illustrate my lecture with actual specimens in their wild state!

The Girl. You would let me come?

Mr. Twigg. Why, yes! Of course! You wouldn't perhaps—er—consider being, as it were, my assistant?

The Girl. Rather! I'll work the lantern at the lectures.

Mr. Twigg. Could we have a magic lantern, and show slides?

The Girl. We should have to. You'd have to point out things in the pictures with a long stick——

Mr. Twigg. —and tap the floor with it every time I wanted you to put in the next picture!

[They both laugh together.]

The Girl. We'll have terrific fun.

Mr. Twigg. We'd do a lot of practical work. I'm not all theory you know. I could show them how to stuff fish.

The Girl. Why—can you stuff fish?

Mr. Twigg. Oh, yes—I—I stuff all my own fish.

The Girl. I've often wondered how it's done.

Mr. Twigg. Well, it 's not easy. It 's messy at first. You must expect to spoil one or two. I should make people begin with little ones. You have to be careful to empty the fish completely, or you 're bound to get trouble afterwards. Then you hold the fish in shape with frames; if not, it looks just like a sausage, you know.

The Girl. [*Smiling.*] I know.

Mr. Twigg. Then you dry it, and pack it with sawdust. Then you varnish it to make it look wet.

The Girl. I 've often wondered how you make them look wet.

Mr. Twigg. Just varnish, that 's all. Then you want three blue beads for the eyes.

The Girl. Three?

Mr. Twigg. It 's best—in case you break one. Of course, most fish have brown eyes, but I always use blue beads—they give vitality. Then I always make the case myself out of fretwood.

The Girl. You do fretwork too?

Mr. Twigg. Oh, yes. You must come and see my home one day. I made almost everything in the house out of fretwood. I 'm doing a big job now—but it 's rather secret. I 'm making a coat-rack for the cricket match to-morrow, to hang in the marquee on the Green. It 'll stop people throwing their coats on the ground and getting their watches trodden on.

The Girl. You 're making it as a surprise?

Mr. Twigg. Well, I told the Major and the Doctor, but they 're so funny. I 'm the slow bowler of the team—and they 're afraid I might go and hurt myself. But I 'm so keen on having it finished. There 's only the holes to take the pegs, and it 's done. [*He pauses and thinks.*] I could teach fretwork. I would take people round to my workshop.

The Girl. We must have a committee meeting on our own, and fix up crowds of things.

Mr. Twigg. I never met any one before who was really interested. You don't know how nice it is.

The Girl. We 'll have to work very hard.

Mr. Twigg. We shall have to lead them along a little at a time; simple lectures at first, gradually working up to bigger things. I 'm glad to feel I can help people like that.

[*Voices are heard approaching from the garden.*

The Doctor and the Major, Dickie, and Mr. Butler return.

Mr. Butler. Well, really, gentlemen, I must say you 're very hard to understand. I lay my plans before you and explain them as clearly as I can. You decide to help——

Doctor. We made no definite decision.

Mr. Butler. Yes, but you were very favourably disposed—and then in five minutes you allow your boy to talk you round again. It 's absolutely a workable scheme. We are all men

of the world, and after all, your boy's very young.

Doctor. There's a great deal to consider, Mr. Butler.

Mr. Twigg. Yes, but, Doctor—you said just now——!

Doctor. All right, Mr. Twigg. We know exactly what *you* think. I'm sorry, Mr. Butler, we must have time. We can't decide now.

Mr. Butler. That's quite all right, Doctor. There's no need to. I'm staying the night in the village. I'm going to London to-morrow evening to meet my partners, so I'll call in the morning for your answer. I'm sure we shall work together. [*He smiles pleasantly and goes to the windows.*] Good morning to you, gentlemen.

[He goes through the windows. His Secretary follows, but for a moment she hesitates, and unseen by the others, gently presses Mr. Twigg's limp hand. There is silence in the room for quite a while before the Doctor speaks.]

Doctor. I'm glad we were firm.

Major. I'm jolly glad I saw through him when I did——

Doctor. [*Quietly.*] We made a mistake.

[Silence falls again. A somewhat nondescript person comes nervously up the path. He is wearing white rubber shoes, grey

flannels, a dark waistcoat, and an open cricket shirt. He taps on the window-frame and peeps in.

The Man. Beg your pardon, Doctor; we was wondering if you 'd forgot about the cricket practice.

[The words have a remarkable effect. The Doctor shakes off his gloom, squares his shoulders, and speaks in a firm voice.]

Doctor. We 're coming right away, Grover.

The Man. We've mended that big 'ole in the net, sir.

Doctor. Splendid! *[He nods to the Man with a smile. The Man goes away. The Doctor turns briskly to the others.]* Can't you see our mistake!—to have met him like *this*! *[He indicates his morning coat, which he pulls off and throws on a chair. He rolls up his sleeves, goes to the side-board, and pulls a pair of white shoes from the cupboard. He sits down and changes his shoes.]* We flattered him! We treated him with respect, and he thought we were afraid! When he comes to-morrow, we 'll meet him in our cricket flannels—and tell him to go to hell! *[He turns to his son.]* Dickie, get the ball, there's a good fellow. It's on the mantelpiece in the breakfast-room—and my pads—the old ones! Don't touch the others.

Dickie. *[Going out.]* Righto.

Major. With all those stout fellows at the back of us, he won't dare to do anything!

Doctor. Of course he won't! It's bluff! He's just a bluffer. [*He rises with his white shoes on, and turns to Mr. Twigg.*] Mr. Twigg, you know how that table goes through the door—take it back into the dining-room, there's a good chap!

[*Mr. Twigg has been standing rather sadly at the windows, gazing over the Green. He blinks once or twice, shakes his head to throw off his dreams, and slowly begins to clear the papers from the table.*]

Major. [*Rolling up his sleeves.*] It's like Drake, isn't it? Playing bowls, and then going out and beating the Spaniards! [*He laughs heartily. Dickie returns with the ball, pads, and a bat.*] Ah! Dickie! that your new bat?

Dickie. I've had it most of the season.

Major. [*Examining it critically.*] Got a crack here. Be careful about that. Bind it with some tape.

[*Mr. Twigg has got the table to the door, and pushed it half-way through. He stands undecided for a moment—nearly climbs over it, but hesitates. He turns and goes out through the French windows.*]

Doctor. [*Twisting the ball artfully between his fingers.*] This time to-morrow we shall be just getting ready for the match. All ready? Come on! Half an hour's good practice before lunch.

Major. [*Looking round.*] Where's Twigg? He must get in some bowling practice.

Doctor. He was here just now—he was moving that table.

Major. Look where he's left it! What a queer fellow he is.

Doctor. Never mind—he'll find out where we've gone—thank God for some fresh air.

[They go together down the path and across the Green. Mr. Twigg has apparently reached the other end of the table, out in the hall, for it gives a little twist, and slowly disappears through the door.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

Towards noon on Wednesday. Another lovely day. The room is empty. There is a tap on the door, a pause, and the Maid comes in. She looks round, and speaks to someone in the passage.

Mary. The Doctor's out on the Green practising 'is cricket. Come in, Mr. Rogers. I'll go and tell 'im.

Mr. Rogers. No; don't bother 'im, miss—if 'e's out cricketing. I'll wait a bit.

[Mr. Rogers is plump and shiny, with a fat face and heavy-lidded eyes. He sits down,

pulling up the knees of his tight, shiny trousers.

Mary. 'E said 'e 'd be back before twelve—it 's gone 'arf-past eleven.

Mr. Rogers. That 's all right. [*There is a pause.*]
Lovely day for the match.

Mary. Grand.

Mr. Rogers. Think we 're goin' to win?

Mary. [*Archly.*] Depends 'oo you call 'we.'

Mr. Rogers. 'Er course—you got connections with Rag'olt, ain't you?

Mary. 'Erb 's their wicket-keeper.

Mr. Rogers. Well, you *are* in a predicament and no mistake! Fiancé on one side—boss on the other! 'Oo 'er you going to shout for?

Mary. I ain't the *sort* that shouts.

Mr. Rogers. Well, 'oo 'er you supporting?

Mary. Both.

Mr. Rogers. Sort o' Jack o' both sides! *Jill o' both sides, I should say.* [*He laughs and repeats the joke to himself for memory's sake.*] *Jill o' both sides.*

Mary. You come about the trouble, Mr. Rogers?
[*Mr. Rogers immediately becomes secretive.*]

Mr. Rogers. Trouble? 'Ow d' you mean?

Mary. Well, *you* know what I mean! You oughter seen the carryings on up 'ere yesterday—*shouting* at each other, they was.

Mr. Rogers. It ain't no laughing matter.

Mary. I *ain't* laughing.

Mr. Rogers. Nor a matter for public discussion.
Mary. [*After a pause.*] No. [*Silence falls. Mary, somewhat abashed, tidies the room a bit, and goes to the windows. Mr. Rogers sits, breathing heavily and blinking.*] 'Ere's the Doctor—comin'.

[*Mr Rogers rises and pulls down his trousers where they have rucked up tightly round his knees. The Doctor and the Major are heard approaching. They come through the gate and up the path. They are both in white flannels and striped cricket caps; both carry coloured blazers over their arms, and a few pads and bats. They are mopping their brows with large handkerchiefs.*

Doctor. [*As they come up the path.*] Have an early lunch and then a lie-down. Can't have you getting tired.

Major. You'd better take a rest, too. It's going to be scorching out there this afternoon.

[*They come into the room.*

Doctor. Ah, Rogers! You want the new scoring-book. Here you are.

[*He goes to the desk and produces a large flat book, which he hands to Mr. Rogers.*

Mr. Rogers. Thank you, sir. [*He hesitates.*] As a matterer fact, sir—there was another thing I just wanted a word about.

[*The Doctor's face becomes grim.*

Doctor. Yes?

Mr. Rogers. I'm sorry to 'ear, sir, about your attitood over Mr. Butler. [*He pauses.*] 'Er course—I know it ain't nice 'aving strangers butting in——

Doctor. Well?

Mr. Rogers. [*Very embarrassed.*] Well, all the same, a man of business 'as got to look *after* 'is business——

Doctor. Mr. Butler must go and look after his business somewhere else.

Mr. Rogers. Yes, sir, but that wasn't exactly my meaning. You see, trade's never too good; custom's limited 'ere. Another couple of 'undred people living 'ereabouts would make a power of difference—what with their friends comin' to see 'em—wanting beds for the night——

Doctor. Are you thinking now of the village or yourself?

Mr. Rogers. I'm thinking of all us folks in trade.

Doctor. Do I assume you are speaking on behalf of *all* the traders in the village?

Mr. Rogers. Well, sir, some of us 'ad a bit of a talk at my place last night.

Doctor. In the face of the knowledge that the Major, Mr. Twigg, and myself were fighting to save you from this man?

Mr. Rogers. Well—I——

Doctor. You doubted us—after all we do for the village.

Mr. Rogers. Nobody's denying what you gentlemen do, Doctor—but we just feel we oughter move with the times.

Doctor. Your father kept the 'Blue Boar'; did he ever hanker after 'moving with the times'?

Mr. Rogers. Well, 'e got all the new business what come in with bicycling—but I'm denied the motoring folks, 'cos of the roads. If Mr. Butler opened things up, it'd make a power of difference to me, and all of us trade folk.

Doctor. Has Mr. Butler told you that he intends to build a large hotel here?

[*Mr. Rogers's jaw drops.*]

Mr. Rogers. No?

Doctor. Naturally he didn't. He is a deceitful man, Rogers. Take very great care. He intends to build a large hotel with gold letters six feet high, lit up by night. A string band will play; your customers will flock there and you will be ruined. But there's no need for you to worry. We are fighting him and we shall win. Now look here, I want you to be very careful in starting this new score-book: the last one got hopelessly muddled and very dirty towards the end. The scorers *must* dry their fingers after tea. I found butter on several pages, and a piece of water-cress in the binding. You must carry a penknife, too—and score with a sharp pencil. Also I don't like the enormous noughts you draw when a

batsman is unfortunate and fails to score. It's an irritating habit of yours. [*He looks at his watch.*] Good gracious! It's nearly twelve! You'd better see about getting the scoring-board across to the marquee. And do tell the boy to be more careful in collecting the numbers together afterwards. I found a 7 in the grass last night.

Mr. Rogers. I've bin looking all over the place for that 7!

[The Doctor goes to the sideboard and brings out a tin number plate with a large white 7 on it.]

Doctor. I can't imagine how it was left. Doesn't the boy *count* them?

Mr. Rogers. 'E ought to.

Doctor. Well, do see that he does. All right, Rogers. I'll see you later. And once again, don't worry. You can trust me to protect the 'Blue Boar' from ruin.

Mr. Rogers. Well, it's very good of you, Doctor, but——

Doctor. [*With a wave of his hand.*] Don't thank me for doing my duty. I'm not a man to stand by and watch you go to the workhouse. [*The Doctor smiles, and waves a friendly dismissal. Mr. Rogers disappears uncomfortably through the french windows. The Doctor turns to the Major.*]

Have a glass of lemon squash?

Major. I will, thanks—I'm as dry as a bone.

Doctor. Say when——

Major. Woh! That 's enough.

Doctor. Soda—or water?

Major. Water, I think. It 's more quenching.

Doctor. [*Filling the Major's glass.*] You have to look after these people like a nurse. [*He hands a glass to the Major and takes one himself.*] Well, here 's to our success this afternoon!

Major. Hear! hear!

[They drink and sit down. The Doctor suddenly looks very tired.]

Doctor. I do wish we hadn't got this trouble hanging over our heads, on a day like this of all days. [*He sighs.*]

Major. Let 's forget all about it. Let him come and find us like this. It 'll make him think.

[Dickie comes in, also dressed in flannels, and a college blazer.]

Major. Ah, Dickie! Feeling pretty fit?

Dickie. Fine, thanks! Have you been out practising?

Major. Yes, we 've had half an hour. It 's beginning to get hot. It 'll be scorching this afternoon.

Dickie. How are you bowling? All right?

Major. Pretty good.

Dickie. I 'd like to have a knock. Are you going out again?

Major. Yes; we came in to see if Twigg was here. Have you seen him?

Dickie. He said he 'd be here at eleven. He 's

got to have some practice this morning to get his fingers loose.

Major. He is the limit. Forgotten all about it, I expect.

Dickie. I saw him as I came back from the village—he was in his workshop. I heard his fretsaw working.

[There is a tense silence. The Doctor and the Major look at one another in sudden fear.]

Doctor. *[Slowly and quietly.]* Did you say—in his workshop?

Dickie. Yes, I saw his head through the window.

Doctor. I told him to keep right away from his fretwork till after the match to-day.

Major. He promised faithfully he would! Are you certain it was Twigg?

Dickie. It couldn't have been any one else.

Major. I've a good mind to burn that damn workshop down! You know what he is with his fretwork. Don't you remember that pipe-rack he made? The awful cuts he got? He couldn't play the organ for a month. He'll never finish a coat-rack alive!

Doctor. I can't believe he would break a promise.

Major. I don't know. He behaved very suspiciously when we spoke to him about it. Don't you remember the way he shuffled his feet and wouldn't look us in the eye?

Dickie. *[At the window.]* Here he comes now, across the Green.

Doctor. [*With intense relief.*] Thank goodness for that!

Dickie. [*Staring hard across the Green.*] Good God!

Major. [*Starting up.*] What is it, Dickie?

[*Dickie turns into the room.*]

Dickie. I'm afraid something's happened—he's got his arm in a sling, his left arm, his bowling arm!

[*There is silence. The Doctor and the Major stand as if turned to stone.*]

Major. [*In a trembling voice.*] It's that damn coat-rack! There isn't another slow bowler in the village if Twigg can't play!

[*The Doctor speaks. His words come hoarsely and brokenly.*]

Doctor. If Twigg's betrayed us—if he's broken his promise—if he's been doing his fretwork and cut his hand—I shall never, *never* speak to him again.

Major. [*Clenching his hands.*] My God, I'll give him hell!

Doctor. Leave *me* to deal with him, Major. I'm president of the club.

Major. It's the captain's job! You leave him to me!

[*Silence falls. The Major and the Doctor stand back in the shadows and gaze at the open, sunlit window. Presently, in the silence, Mr. Twigg creeps in. He is dressed in an old tweed suit—he is hatless and pale. His*]

arm is slung in an old green handkerchief, his hand protrudes, covered in a bulky, ill-made bandage. He hesitates on the threshold, blinking to accustom his eyes from the glare of the sunlit Green. He sees the Doctor and Major standing like pale statues in the shadows. He gives a little shudder and looks at them in dumb appeal. There is no word for a while. Then Mr. Twigg speaks in a thin, dry voice.

Mr. Twigg. I 'm awfully sorry. The chisel slipped.

[Again there is silence. Then the Doctor speaks; his words come like an icy stream.

Doctor. Five minutes ago, Mr. Twigg, I thought of you as a friend of mine; an honourable man whose word was his bond. Now I know you to be a deceitful man—a man who puts his own mean selfish pleasure before the honour of the village at cricket.

Major. *[Quivering with anger.]* You fool!

Doctor. You care nothing for the village—you craved only to flaunt your fretwork before the eyes of strangers.

Major. D' you suppose anybody was going to care a damn for your idiotic coat-rack?

Doctor. You 've ruined our chances in the match this afternoon, that match above all others that we hoped to win.

Major. Dirty—low-down trick.

Doctor. I've nothing further to say, Mr. Twigg, except that the village is the sadder by knowing it has in its midst a man who breaks his word.

[Mr. Twigg has stood quite still, gazing in front of him with an expression of unspeakable misery. The corners of his mouth quiver, he gives a little choking sigh and covers his face with his uninjured hand. He sways, and Dickie quickly steps forward.]

Dickie. Look out! He's fainting! *[He steadies Mr. Twigg and leads him to a chair. The pale anger in the Doctor's face softens to shame; he is by Mr. Twigg's side, soothing him.]* Undo his collar!

Major. Put a key down his neck!

Doctor. All right, Major, all right. Leave him to me. *[He turns and calls.]* Mary! Mary! *[He picks up the bell, rings it and turns back to Mr. Twigg. He speaks very softly.]* I'm very, very sorry, Mr. Twigg.

Mr. Twigg. *[Through convulsive sobs.]* I—feel—so beastly. I just want to go and die.

Doctor. Dickie! Run and get a basin of water and my surgical box.

[Dickie hurries away, passing Mary, who hurries in.]

Mary. Did you ring, sir?

Doctor. Yes, Mary. Bring the decanter of brandy. Here's the key.

[Mary hurries away.]

Mr. Twigg. I—I don't think I can take any brandy.

Doctor. Just a nice drop of sherry?

Mr. Twigg. Well—just a small drop.

Doctor. Major! A glass of sherry. [*The Major hurries to the sideboard.*] You must try and forgive me, Mr. Twigg. I behaved like a beast.

Mr. Twigg. I didn't *want* the chisel to slip.

Doctor. Of course you didn't.

[The Major returns with the flagon of sherry; he pours out a glass and hands it to Mr. Twigg.]

Major. Here—put that inside you.

Mr. Twigg. I—I don't think I can take it after all. I—I feel so frightfully funny—all over.

Major. Come on, drink it up!

[He pushes the drink into Mr. Twigg's hand with rough kindness, and turns away, muttering 'Damn fool!' Mr. Twigg rolls his eyes miserably over the edge of the glass and takes a sip. The door opens and Mrs. Wetherby hurries in.

Mrs. W. Arthur, what *has* happened? Poor Mr. Twigg! [*She goes over to Mr. Twigg in dismay.*]

Doctor. It's all right, Mabel—it's quite all right!

Mr. Twigg. [*Almost proudly.*] The chisel slipped.

Mrs. W. Can't I do anything? Why! you haven't given him a cushion! [*She gets a cushion and stuffs it behind Mr. Twigg.*]

Doctor. Now then, let me have a look. I must dress it properly. [*He begins to unwind the ungainly bandage from Mr. Twigg's hand.*]

Mrs. W. Mrs. Forrester's in the breakfast-room, helping with the tea. Hadn't she better go for Mr. Twigg's housekeeper—or shall I send a message?

Mr. Twigg. Oh, you are so kind—but don't bother, please. My housekeeper fainted when she saw what I'd done, but she was coming to all right as I left.

[*Mrs. Forrester, the Major's wife, hurries in.*]

Mrs. F. Has Mr. Twigg hurt himself? [*She sees the bandage being unwound.*] Oh—dear——

Major. [*Testily.*] It's all right, Joan. Don't fuss.

[*The Doctor is coming towards the end of the bandage, which begins to be rather blood-stained. He very tenderly removes the last portion. Mr. Twigg winces in pain, but keeps quite quiet.*]

Doctor. [*Soothingly.*] There we are! [*He examines the finger carefully.*] Oh, yes — it's nothing serious—a nasty cut, but not dangerous.

Major. [*Peering at the finger.*] Will he be able to play?

Doctor. My dear Major—look! [*He holds up the finger.*] The finger he spins the ball with.

Major. What a fool the man is!

[*Dickie hurries in with the bowl of water. He puts it on the small table beside the Doctor,*]

BADGER'S GREEN

Act II. Sc. ii.

removing the flagon of sherry to the floor beside Mr. Twigg. Mary hurries in, very distressed.

Mary. I don't think you gave me the right key, sir; this one don't turn.

Doctor. Never mind, Mary, we shan't want the brandy after all.

[There is a ring at the bell.]

Mrs. W. I expect that 's Mrs. Bunting with the scones. Take them into the breakfast-room, Mary.

Major. *[To his wife.]* Hadn't you better be getting on with the tea? It 's past twelve, they 'll be round with the trolley soon.

[The Ladies go slowly towards the door.]

Mrs. W. Do say if you want anything, Mr. Twigg—won't you?

Mrs. F. I 'll go and fetch your housekeeper, if you like.

Major. Don't fuss, Joan—get on with the teas.

[The Ladies go out.] Extraordinary what a fuss women make!

Mr. Twigg. I was being so careful. I 'd finished the whole thing. There was just a little bit of rough stuff to take off one end. I used the chisel, and it slipped.

Doctor. *[Carefully re-dressing the wound after bathing it.]* Never mind, Mr. Twigg. The coat-rack 's going to be fine, hanging up in the marquee. It 'll stop all the coats being thrown on the

ground. You *have* done something for the village, after all.

Mr. Twigg. Well, I do try.

*[The Major is pacing irritably to and fro ;
Dickie is gazing gloomily out of the window.]*

Major. What on earth are we going to do? With Hobson on the sick-list and Jones away, there isn't a man in the village fit to put in the team.

Dickie. What about Rogers?

Major. He's hopeless. He's always so bleary in the afternoons.

Dickie. Well, who on earth is there?

[Mary has come in, and is hovering nervously in the background. She addresses the Doctor.]

Mary. There's Mr. Butler, sir.

[There is a general start of surprise ; the Major looks at the Doctor in dismay.]

Major. Good heavens! I'd forgotten *that* wretched man was due!

Doctor. We can't see him! We've enough trouble as it is. Tell him we can't see him, Mary.

Dickie. Just a minute. What *about* Mr. Butler?

Major. What d' you mean?

Dickie. He's not such a bad fellow. They tell me he was talking at the 'Blue Boar' last night. Apparently he's played a bit of cricket.

Major. You're not suggesting he plays for *us*?

Dickie. Why not?

Major. I wouldn't be seen dead playing with him.

Dickie. Even if it made the difference between winning or losing against Ragholt?

Major. Even if it means that!

Doctor. Er—Mary, wait outside. We'll let you know our decision in a few moments. [*He turns to Dickie.*] He'd never play—even if we asked him, Dickie.

Dickie. You don't often find a keen man refusing a game. Besides, what's to prevent us playing a deeper game as well? He told us yesterday he's got to catch the six o'clock from Winchester.

Major. Well?

Dickie. Can you imagine any man leaving for a train in the middle of an innings? Or just as he's got his length with the ball?

Major. No, I can't. I do see your idea—but it's very dangerous.

Dickie. He'd never leave if the game were getting thrilling; suppose he lost his train and missed his meeting?

Major. It's a long chance.

Dickie. Isn't it worth it? To fill our team, and possibly knock his plan on the head?

Major. Supposing he *did* go—half-way through?

Dickie. Well, at least we'd have him a couple of hours—he may be a useful man.

Major. Well, I don't mind. They say 'all's fair in love and war,' don't they?

Doctor. [*Absently.*] Er—yes. [*He goes to the door and speaks to Mary.*] Ask Mr. Butler in, Mary.

Dickie. We must flatter him. Butter him up a bit.

Major. What shall we do? Say we 've heard he 's a great cricketer?

Dickie. No, be careful. Not a '*great*' cricketer. Begin by saying we 've heard the villagers talking about him.

Major. That 's the line! Look out!

[Mary opens the door and ushers Mr. Butler and his Secretary in.]

Mr. Butler. [*Jovially.*] Ah, Doctor! You look like business!

Doctor. Er—yes. We 've got our most important match to-day. Er—will you have a glass of sherry, Mr. Butler?

Mr. Butler. [*Surprised.*] That 's very nice of you.

[They look for the sherry bottle, which is down behind Mr. Twigg's chair, where Dickie put it when he brought in the bowl of water.]

Doctor. [*Searching.*] That 's funny. Mary must have taken it away.

[He goes towards the door, but Mr. Butler detains him.]

Mr. Butler. Please don't bother, Doctor. I 've just had the pleasure of meeting your wife. She 's got a wonderful pile of tea out there.

Doctor. Yes; we 're trying to do everything as

well as possible. We are playing our great rivals—a village called Ragholt.

Mr. Butler. Is that the place you come through—just before here?

Doctor. Yes, in the valley; you drop down into it from the main road.

Mr. Butler. Charming little place. I nearly as possible decided on Ragholt instead of here.

[The Doctor and the Major exchange excited glances.]

Doctor. It's always a terrific game; but Ragholt has beaten us three years running. We were determined to win to-day. Everything was in our favour; we have my son with us; the Major is bowling splendidly this year, and now a most terrible misfortune has occurred.

[He waves despairingly towards Mr. Twigg.]

Mr. Twigg displays his bandaged hand.

Mr. Butler. What a pity!

Doctor. Mr. Twigg, our only slow bowler, was completing a coat-rack for the marquee——

Mr. Twigg. The chisel slipped.

Mr. Butler. How sickening!

Doctor. It made a deep wound in the finger he spins the ball with. *[Mr. Butler draws in his breath to denote sympathy.]* You see what an awful blow it is? You are a cricketer yourself—you understand. We have no other man to play.

Mr. Butler. How did you know *I* was a cricketer?

Doctor. [*Laughing.*] Villagers talk.

Mr. Butler. They don't waste much time. We were having a bit of gossip down at the inn last night—fancy it getting up to you!

Doctor. A thought occurred to us just before you came, Mr. Butler. We knew yesterday you were a sportsman—a white man—despite our differences in the world of business. But it wasn't till to-day we knew you were a cricketer. A faint hope came to us——

Mr. Twigg. I'd lend you my white flannel trousers.

Major. [*Viciously.*] Shut up!

Doctor. —a wild hope—that perhaps you would fill the breach.

Mr. Butler. [*Shaking his head.*] Well, I'm afraid——

Doctor. [*Interrupting.*] There's no need for me to tell you what our gratitude would be—how the whole village would rise and cheer you.

Mr. Butler. It's a pity—I'd like to play, but my train's at six from Winchester. I've got a car coming for me at half-past five.

Doctor. But we start at 2.30. For three hours we should have you.

Mr. Butler. But I'm not even a member of your club!

Doctor. We can soon put that right! Major, fill in a form; there's one on my desk.

[The Major hurries to the desk.]

Mr. Butler. I don't think I dare. Supposing at half-past four, I was batting—and the match was critical——

Doctor. We must risk that. We may win the game in two hours.

Mr. Butler. There's no other train. I meet my directors in London this evening. They've all got their pet schemes to develop other places. I must get my word in to-night.

Major. [*Looking up from the form.*] Herbert William Butler, isn't it?

Doctor. Yes. [*He dives into his pocket and produces Mr. Butler's card—he reads Mr. Butler's address to the Major: 'Burford House, High Holborn'—and hands the Major the card.*]

Mr. Butler. It isn't fair on you or me, if I were to play.

Doctor. Have you ever played in a genuine game on a village green?

Mr. Butler. Not a real genuine village green.

Doctor. It's something you will never forget. The smooth green—the great elms round it—the old houses peering out of the shade—the lovely quiet downs beyond—old Hobson's mare watching over a gate—people lying under the trees—the glorious firm 'chock' of the ball against the bat. You won't forget it.

Major. [*Advancing with the completed form.*] There's a quorum, isn't there? You and me—

and Twigg? We can have a committee meeting right away. [*He reads.*]

'Member for Election.

Name: Herbert William Butler.

Occupation: Company Director.

Address: Burford House, High Holborn.

Proposed by Doctor Wetherby.

Seconded by Major Forrester.'

[*He looks up.*] Those in favour? [*The Doctor and Mr. Twigg raise their hands.*] Carried nem. con.

[*The Doctor smiles and shakes Mr. Butler by the hand.*]

Doctor. The colours are red, green, and yellow.

Mr. Twigg will see that you get a straw-hat-band. You can't imagine what this means to us, Mr. Butler. It's splendid of you.

Major. [*Holding out his hand.*] You're a white man, you've made a true friend.

Doctor. I've got a splendid idea! You know the Vicar's little house—next to the Vicarage? Mr. Butler will take it for a week-end cottage. He'll come and play as a regular member.

Mr. Butler. [*Laughing.*] Well—you *are* the limit!

Doctor. Wait till you see the cottage. It's a lovely little place. Now—what about clothes for Mr. Butler? I can fix him up with a shirt and boots.

Major. I can do the trousers—pity Twigg's such

a little man. Mr. Butler could have had his things.

Doctor. It's half-past twelve! We must have a look round. Come along, Mr. Butler, you must see the pitch. You *do* bowl, don't you?

Mr. Butler. Well, I'm not a left-hander.

Doctor. But you *do* bowl?

Mr. Butler. A bit.

Doctor. Splendid! Slow?

Mr. Butler. Slow medium.

Doctor. Magnificent! You must decide which end you'd like to bowl from. Come along!

Mr. Butler. I *must* go in five hours' time.

Doctor. Five hours! Empires have been made in five hours.

[They go out together, talking and laughing. Dickie lingers behind. The Girl has been forgotten. He turns to her.]

Dickie. Pity no one introduced us, isn't it?

The Girl. *[Laughing.]* It is, rather.

Dickie. My mother's doing tea for the players this afternoon—like to help?

The Girl. I'd love to. Sure I shan't be in the way?

Dickie. Everybody who helps'll be in the way. One more or less won't matter. My mother's over at the marquee now, getting things ready. Care to come across?

The Girl. I'd love to. *[She turns to Mr. Twigg as they go out.]* I'm so sorry, Mr. Twigg.

Act II. Sc. ii.

BADGER'S GREEN

Dickie. [*Suddenly remembering.*] Oh! How's the hand?

Mr. Twigg. A little easier, thank you, Dickie. It still throbs a bit.

Dickie. Keep it slung well up.

[*Dickie and the Girl go out together. Mr. Twigg is alone, very tired and sad. He feebly sips his sherry.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS



SCENE I

The interior of a white marquee which has been pitched to overlook the Village Green.

It has two openings. One looks out towards the cricket pitch, which is just out of view, the other opens to the side. A trestle table stands along the side of the tent between the openings. There is also a small table and two chairs for the scorers. Otherwise the tent is empty. It is a little after midday. The sun is baking the Green outside.

Mr. Rogers comes in with a pile of tin scoring-numbers under one arm, and the new scoring-book under the other. He is dressed as he was when he went to see the Doctor, except that he is now wearing a straw hat with a bright band round it, and a pair of white shoes. He is followed by a small harassed Boy, who is staggering under the weight of a large scoring-board. Mr. Rogers drops the pile of numbers on the trestle table, and turns to the Boy, who is trying to get the score-board through the opening.

Mr. Rogers. What's the good of trying to get the board in 'ere? Stand it up outside. No! not there—over on the right. [The Boy puts the board up and sighs with relief.] Now look 'ere,

George! Come inside. There's thirty-two numbers 'ere—see? And when you take 'em back there's got to be thirty-two—see? Last week you left one of them seven's out on the grass—lying out there rusting in the rain all night. The Doctor found it 'imself. Don't allow it to 'appen again, see? Else we'll 'ave Charlie to put the numbers up next week. Now take 'em out and sort 'em on this bit of noospaper. Then cut back for yer dinner. Be 'ere at two-fifteen. [*The Boy takes the numbers and goes outside. Mr. Rogers picks up the scoring-table and places it with great care so that he can secure a good view of the cricket pitch. He then places the chairs behind it. He puts the score-book on the table, produces a pencil and laboriously sharpens it to a point. A Woman appears, carrying a large tea-urn; she is followed by a Boy with two buckets of cold tea. Behind comes a smaller Boy with a bundle of sticks. The Woman dumps the tea-urn on the table, and removes the lid. The Boy with the buckets pours in the tea. Mr. Rogers looks on suspiciously.*]

You ain't goin' to try and 'ot that tea up in 'ere?
Woman. Mrs. Wetherby said: 'Put the urn on the table.'

Mr. Rogers. Well, 'ow are you goin' to 'ot the tea up?

Woman. That 's none o' my business. I do what I 'm told.

Mr. Rogers. What 's all them sticks for?

Woman. To make a fire.

Boy. To 'ot the tea up, Mrs. Wetherby said.

Mr. Rogers. You can't light a lot o' sticks in 'ere.

Boy. Mrs. Wetherby said: 'Light the sticks outside.'

Mr. Rogers. What you want to do 's to make a fire outside and 'ot the tea in cans—then pour it in the urn. [*His eye falls on the urn. Nobody has noticed that the tap was turned on when the Boy poured the tea in. Mr. Rogers shouts.*] Hi! Look at all that bloomin' tea running out! [*There is a rush to the urn, but the urn is a new one, and the tap is very stiff.*] Damn thing's stuck. [*He puts his thumb over the spout and and turns to the Boy.*] 'Ere—gimme an 'ankerchief! [*One of the Boys produces a dirty handkerchief from his pocket. Mr. Rogers winds it round the tap.*] Wants a drop of oil. [*They struggle with the tap, and finally get it to turn off.*] That 's got it. Lucky I noticed when I did. [*He carefully removes the handkerchief from the tap and squeezes it into the urn. He removes his straw hat, and wipes his brow with the back of his hand.*] Can't understand why they couldn't 'ave a proper caterer. Silly, leaving a big job like this to amateurs. 'Spose they never get the tea 'ot at all?

Woman. Well, arf of it 's gorn.

Mr. Rogers. That don't lift the responsibility for

what 's left. [*A small Boy, propelling a handcart, and escorted by Mrs. Wetherby and Mrs. Forrester, draws up outside the marquee. They bring in piles of plates, cups, saucers, bread and butter and cake. Mr. Rogers lifts his hat.*] Good morning, mam.

Mrs. W. Good morning, Mr. Rogers. [*She is carrying a small spirit-burning contrivance.*] Do you understand these things? It fits under the urn.

[*Mr. Rogers becomes useful.*]

Mr. Rogers. That 's it, mam—fits like this. You want some methylated.

Mrs. W. Yes, of course we shall.

Mr. Rogers. You want to 'eat up the tea outside—this 'll only do to keep it 'ot.

Mrs. W. Yes. [*She turns to the Boy with the sticks.*] Charlie—make a nice fire out over there—beyond those trees, so that the smoke won't blow in here.

Boy. Yes, mam.

Mrs. W. [*Looking into the urn.*] Why, there 's not nearly enough tea, Mrs. Evans. We shall want a lot more. Whatever made you put it straight into the urn?

Woman. Well, mam, I thought it was the place.

Mrs. W. We shall have to draw it off into the buckets again. You 'll have to make quite a lot more.

Woman. Very good, mam. [*She goes out with one of the buckets.*]

[*Mrs. Wetherby struggles with the tap, which won't turn on. Mr. Rogers steps forward.*

Mr. Rogers. Allow me, mam. [*He also struggles considerably before it turns.*] Bit stiff—wants a bit of oil.

Mrs. F. [*Pausing from bringing in the tea things.*] What about a bit of butter?

Mr. Rogers. That 'll do, mam. [*He rubs a piece of butter on the tap.*]

Mrs. W. [*To the Boy who is catching the tea in the bucket.*] When you 've got it all, take it outside to where you are making the fire. Tommy's bringing a big cauldron up from Mr. Hobson's.

Mrs. F. Shall we unpack now?

Mrs. W. Oh, I think we 'd better leave it; the bread and butter would get terribly dry. We 'll cut the cake just before tea so that it 's quite fresh.

Mrs. F. Very well. Don't forget to bring the flowers. I 'll bring the vases this afternoon.

Mrs. W. And, Mr. Rogers, I *wonder* if you could arrange for some methylated?

Mr. Rogers. Very good, mam. I 'll get Jim to bring up a bottle.

Mrs. W. That 's awfully kind of you. [*She takes a glance round.*] Now I think we 'll leave everything as it is till this afternoon. I feel nearly dead.

Mrs. F. It 's such a big business.

Mrs. W. What time ought tea to be ready?

Mr. Rogers. Well, it depends on the game, mam. Four o'clock, unless an innings' is nearly finished. Then we 'd wait. I 'll be 'ere all the time, mam. I 'll give you the wink.

Mrs. W. Thank you. [*To Mrs. Forrester.*] Our menfolk 'll be clamouring for lunch if we don't go.

[The Ladies leave. The Boy has got the bucket filled with tea and is struggling to turn off the tap. The tea is beginning to run over. He calls in a panic to Mr. Rogers, who is just leaving the tent.]

Boy. Hi! Mr. Rogers! 'Elp with this tap!

Mr. Rogers. It 's all right—rub the butter in.

Boy. It won't turn no'ow.

Mr. Rogers. Well, where 's the other bucket?

Boy. Mrs. Evans took it.

[Mr. Rogers goes to help—struggles with the tap, and finally loses his temper.]

Mr. Rogers. I can't help the damn thing! Oughter bin seen to afore it was used. [*He looks into the urn.*] Ain't more 'n a cupful left. Better leave it. [*He goes out.*]

[The Boy removes the bucket, regretfully watches the remaining tea drain away, and goes out carrying what he has saved. Voices are heard approaching.]

Doctor. [*Outside.*] Come and have a look at the marquee, Mr. Butler. [*The Doctor, the Major, and Mr. Butler stroll in. Mr. Butler has a pair*

of white trousers over his arm.] We found it difficult to get a plain white one; contractors have a perfect mania for supplying hideous striped ones. In fact, we had to send one back; it was a great rush to get this in time.

Major. It's a lot better than a dusty old pavilion.

Doctor. There's no comparison.

Mr. Butler. You get quite a crowd, I suppose?

Doctor. We expect eighty or ninety people here to-day; in fact this weather may bring it up to three figures.

Mr. Butler. [*Looking at the piles of tea things.*]

Why! Aren't those all the provisions I saw up at your house just now? You've got them over pretty smartly.

Major. Yes, we have to organize things pretty thoroughly. You can't imagine the details there are to attend to; we have a special sub-committee to look after it.

Doctor. Now, I think you ought to see the pitch; there's a slight slope from the farther end. You may find it suits you better than bowling from this end.

Major. You'd better explain to me how you like your fielders placed. It'll save time.

Doctor. I hoped my wife would be here—apparently she's gone—but it doesn't matter. I want you to join us in a modest lunch, Mr. Butler.

Mr. Butler. Well, that's very kind of you, but

I do think I ought to go back to the 'Blue Boar.' I'd better pack my bag and bring it with me. The car can pick me up here.

Doctor. Oh, but you must lunch with us. If you have it at the 'Blue Boar,' Rogers will give you a heavy plate of red meat—very bad to play on in a hot sun. We are just having a little boiled white fish, and fruit.

Mr. Butler. Well, it's very good of you, Doctor. It certainly sounds more attractive than steak pudding. [*They laugh together as they walk to the opening facing the Green. Just outside, the Doctor points into the distance.*] There's the little house I spoke about. The Vicar only wants a pound a week. Take it for a weekend cottage, and play for us on Saturdays.

Mr. Butler. I wish I could.

Major. As a full member of the club, it's your duty.

Doctor. I prophesy Mr. Butler will be a vice-president in the very near future.

Mr. Butler. Oh, I haven't deserved that yet.

[*They walk out together laughing.*]

Doctor. Well, now you must come and see the pitch.

[*They go out on to the Green. Some Boys appear and walk by, carrying some garden seats. The Major pauses for a moment to superintend.*]

Major. Are those Mrs. Graham's garden seats?

Boys. [*In chorus.*] Yes, sir.

Major. Well, be most careful with them. The paint was scratched on one last year. See that nobody stands on them.

Boys. [*In chorus.*] Yes, sir.

[The Major goes on to overtake the others. Dickie and the Girl come through the side opening. Dickie glances round and turns to the girl.]

Dickie. Mother seems to have cleared off. It doesn't matter, though. If you turn up at half-past two and lend a hand, there's bound to be plenty to do.

The Girl. I'm certain to be in the way.

Dickie. That doesn't matter. There wouldn't be enough to do if people didn't get in the way.

The Girl. Can I bring anything? I could buy some fruit in the village.

Dickie. Oh, Lord, no—there's loads of stuff here. They've allowed four slices of bread-and-butter per man, with an extra twenty slices to allow for gate crashers. [*He is looking out on to the Green. Suddenly he laughs.*] Do look at the Guv'nor out there, stroking the pitch. I believe he knows every blade of grass.

The Girl. D'you live with him down here?

Dickie. No; I'm up at Cambridge till next June. I spend most of my vacs here—and work. I don't get time to work much at Cambridge.

The Girl. My brother's at Trinity.

[Dickie looks at the girl in astonishment.]

Dickie. At Trinity? *I 'm* at Trinity!

The Girl. D' you know him?

Dickie. What 's his name?

The Girl. Rawlinson.

Dickie. What! Rawly? He isn't your *brother*—
is he?

The Girl. [*Laughing.*] Yes.

Dickie. Well, I 'm damned! Old Rawly—your
brother! And here we 've been staring at each
other for two days! He digs quite near me. Do
you ever come up?

The Girl. I generally manage to run up once or
twice a term.

Dickie. You know your brother's room in Stan-
ford Street? I 'm just round the corner in
Peter Square. Look here—come up and lunch
with us this morning. My mother knows
Rawly—she met him last term at the May races
—were you up there then?

The Girl. Just for the last day.

Dickie. You must have seen me rowing.

The Girl. I must have done.

Dickie. Of course, your brother 's going to be a
doctor, isn't he? So am I.

The Girl. To take over here when your father
retires?

Dickie. [*Laughing.*] I don't know. The Guv'nor 's
rather funny about that. He 'd like to think so
—in a way. He rather loves the old place, he 'd
hate to think of a stranger butting in. And yet

I think he 'd like to see me do — something more. After all, it 's a fine old place to come to now and then, but I don't think I should like to work here always.

The Girl. I think we can work better for knowing there are places like this to come to for a rest.

Dickie. That 's what I feel. I couldn't do my work here—but I shall work better if I know I can come here now and then. But do you see how different it is for old people? The Guv'nor—the Major—and Mr. Twigg. You see now the village has gradually—sort of—closed round them. There 's nothing anywhere else in the world, if they lost what they 've got here. It *must* go on as it is.

The Girl. I felt that too. But isn't it rather a losing battle? I mean—isn't it rather like trying to keep back an encroaching sea?

Dickie. You can build a dam and turn the sea into other people's land. Don't you think Butler would go somewhere else?

The Girl. I think his mind 's made up.

Dickie. Couldn't you go on strike, or something?

The Girl. [*Laughing.*] I 've got to earn my living.

Dickie. Anyway, you will come up to lunch?

The Girl. Well, I 'm afraid Mr. Butler expects——

Dickie. Oh, damn Butler! He doesn't *own* you!

The Girl. I ought to ask him.

Dickie. Well, let 's catch him before he goes.

[*There is a pause before they go out on to the*

Green.] You simply *can't* go this evening—where's Rawly? Can't I ask him down to stay too?

The Girl. I must go back.

Dickie. But you must come down again.

[*They walk out together across the Green.*

There has been a certain amount of passing to and fro outside ; Boys carrying seats, a man with a couple of dixies, etc. A small Boy is passing—he looks back and shouts out : ' 'Ere ! Major ses you ain't to climb about on them seats. Go on—'op it.' He pauses, puts his tongue out, and passes out of sight.

The marquee is empty. It is quiet out on the Green. It seems as if everyone has gone to their midday meal. A small Man stealthily looks in through the side opening, satisfies himself that he is unobserved, and comes quietly in. It is Mr. Twigg. Under his arm he carries a long, untidy brown paper parcel. He comes to the opposite side of the marquee, and observes a hook in the canvas. He stealthily undoes his parcel, and produces a shaped piece of wood from which several long wooden pegs protrude. It is a coat-rack. He handles it almost lovingly, and hangs it by a cord from the hook. He goes to the opening to see that he is quite alone, returns, and takes

off his coat, wincing a little as he pulls the sleeve over his bandaged hand. Carefully he hangs the coat on a peg. The rack tilts, and the coat slips off. He stands in some uncertainty for a moment, picks up the coat and tries again, on a different peg. Once more the coat slides off to the ground. He tries his hat, but it slips off. He stands some while in thought. With a sudden impulse he hangs his coat on one hook and his hat on the other, but both slip off to the ground. He stares for a moment, with drooping lip and expressionless eyes, at the bright shaft of sun that shines through the opening across the grass. Then he takes the coat-rack down, and wraps the brown paper round it. He sees a piece of old canvas lying on the ground. He takes it up, and covers the coat-rack as if it were something unclean.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

The marquee, later in the day.

A remarkable change has taken place from the quietness of the morning. The cricket match is in full swing; the excitement is growing intense. Mrs. Wetherby and Mrs. Forrester are relatively unconcerned with the tension on the Green outside; the climax of the cricket match is of secondary importance to the safe packing of the crockery borrowed for the tea. The trestle table is littered with empty cups and plates; there is no sign of any food left. They are stowing the tea-things into wooden boxes. A solitary figure lingers at the table; a red-headed Cricketer with pads on, and a bat in his hand. He is sipping a cup of tea, moistening his lips and starting with fright at every sound from the Green. He is acutely conscious of his coming responsibility. Mr. Rogers is sitting at the small table, scoring. Occasionally he turns sideways to sharpen his pencil to a finer point. Beside him sits the Scorer who represents the opposing team, a very small man, with a large moustache from which protrudes a pipe. As the scene opens, a cheer spreads round the Green. It is not an organized cheer; it is a ragged cheer from people scattered under trees or lounging on seats. A Man in flannels rushes across the opening, apparently pursuing the ball. Two small Boys

jump up in front of Mr. Rogers and dance with excitement.

Mr. Rogers. 'Ere! Sit down, can't you! 'Ow d' you think I can see to score with you in the light! [*The Boys subside.*] 'Oo 'it that?

Boys. [*In chorus.*] The Doctor!

Mr. Rogers. [*Turning to his fellow-scorer.*] One to the Doctor! [*They laboriously record the run in their scoring-books. As they do so, there comes the woody 'chock' of bat against ball—a more excited cheer and shouts of 'Run! Run!' The Boys dance frantically in front of Mr. Rogers, who becomes convulsed with fury.*] Look 'ere! I'll send you all 'ome if you don't take care! Go on! 'Op it! [*He makes a ferocious movement as if about to rise. The Boys fade away—there are cries of 'Boundary!' 'Four!'*] Four, was it? 'Ow the 'ell can a feller score with them bloomin' boys about? Four to Mr. Dickie. [*He puts the runs down and calls to the Boy beside the score-board.*] That 's 80. Put up 80!

[The Boy selects a number 8 from the grass and hangs it on the board over a 7. The Major hurries in, extremely red in the face and excited.]

Major. Magnificent! Splendid! That 's just 80, isn't it, Rogers?

Mr. Rogers. Yes, sir—80.

Major. Fourteen more and we've beaten the blighters! We'll teach 'em to brag! [*He*

crosses to the anxious Batsman at the table, bursting with advice.] Don't excite yourself, Morgan. You may have to go in—you may not. It all depends. But, for heaven's sake, don't lose your head! Play quietly and easily, just as if you were practising!

[Mr. Twigg rushes in, tremendously excited.]
Mr. Twigg. Fourteen runs to get and the match to win! We'll do it! We must do it! Mrs. Wetherby, aren't you proud of your husband—batting out there—fighting for the village? And your son—oh, Dickie's a fine boy! Did you see him hit that one into the 'Blue Boar'? Right through the tap-room window.

[Mr. Rogers looks round a little balefully, but quickly turns at the crack of ball against bat and another frantic cheer. Mr. Twigg jumps as if shot—turns and runs out on to the Green, waving his arms oblivious to his injured hand, shouting: 'Oh, good shot, sir! good shot! Run! Run! Hurrah!']
Mr. Rogers. *[Acknowledging the Umpire's signal with a dignified wave of his pencil.]* Boundary! Four. Four to Mr. Dickie.

[The heads of the Scorers bend over their books as they record the runs.]
Major. Ten to get—my God! Ten to get! *[He turns to the Ladies.]* You must come and watch—never mind those dirty cups—come along, Joan!

Mrs. W. Arthur *will* be tired to-morrow! Out there in that awful sun!

Major. Aren't you proud of him? Look at him now standing out there batting like a hero. Fine old chap! *He* doesn't lose his head in a crisis, like the youngsters! Give me the old dog for the rough road. [*He suddenly breaks off as another shout comes from the Green.*] Splendid! Four byes—only six more now. [*They hurry out together. The red-haired Batsman is left alone—a picture of misery—hardly daring to watch or listen. Suddenly there is a cry of 'How's that?' followed by a sonorous 'Out' from the Umpire. A groan of consternation drifts in from the Green. The Batsman at the table starts violently, and drops his cup of tea. The Major returns—slowly and quietly—his face suddenly drawn with anxiety. He speaks hoarsely.*] Dickie's out! [*He looks at the waiting Batsman.*] Mr. Dickie's out, Morgan! Six more runs to get and only you and Mr. Butler to bat! For heaven's sake play carefully—don't lose your head!

[*Mr. Twigg rushes in.*]

Mr. Twigg. Dickie's out!

Major. [*Irritably.*] I know he's out.

Mr. Twigg. [*Imploringly to the waiting Batsman, who is now doggedly rolling up his sleeves.*] Oh, Morgan! It's up to you now! Keep cool—and calculated.

Major. Keep your legs well out of the wicket!

[There is some vigorous clapping from the Green. Dickie is seen returning from his innings; he takes off his cap and smilingly acknowledges the applause. Mr. Rogers looks up at the small Boy who is waiting inquiringly to put the score on the board.]

Mr. Rogers. Last man: 28. 88 for 8. Last man: 28.

[The Boy searches for the correct numbers to put on the board, and turns anxiously to Mr. Rogers.]

Boy. We ain't got enough 8's.

Mr. Rogers. Go on—we've got six blooming 8's. Use yer eyes.

[The Boy eventually finds one. Dickie comes in, wiping his brow; the Major runs to him and pats him on the back.]

Major. Well played, Dickie! Jolly fine! Oh, if only you hadn't got out! *[He turns and runs over to the Batsman.]* Don't be tempted to swipe. Play quietly!

Dickie. *[Looking up from removing his pads.]* Keep an eye on that fat man, bowling in the green waistcoat—he makes them spin.

Major. You'd better wear a cap—the sun's getting troublesome.

Mr. Twigg. *[Feeling the bat.]* Isn't this bat too heavy? Why not——

Major. *[Breaking in.]* Don't worry him, Twigg—leave him alone! *[He turns to the Batsman.]*

Don't for heaven's sake try any short runs—the Doctor's very tired.

[The Batsman has rolled his sleeves almost to his shoulders. Without a word he spits on his hands and goes out as if to execution.]

Dickie. Good luck, Morgan!

Mr. Twigg. Good luck—and God bless you!

Major. Only hit the crooked ones! *[Applause greets the Batsman as he appears on the Green. There are shouts of: 'Hooray—ay!' 'Good old Ginger!' 'Good luck, Ginger!'—and a little excited laughter. The Major looks round anxiously.]*

Where's Butler? He'd better get ready to go in!

[The Girl comes in with Dickie's scarf and blazer. She goes to Dickie.]

Girl. Well played! Do you want these?

Dickie. *[Rising.]* Thanks awfully!

Major. Have you seen Mr. Butler? It's time he got his pads on.

Girl. I saw him outside just now.

Major. Well, he may be wanted any moment—let's find him at once.

[He goes towards the Green as a Man in a nondescript chaffeur's uniform appears at the side opening.]

Man. Is Mr. Butler 'ere, sir? Car waiting to take 'im into Winchester.

Major. What? *[The significance of the Chauffeur's remark gradually sinks in.]* No—he's—he's not here! He's busy! He—he can't come!

Man. I was told to pick 'im up for certain at 'arf-past five, sir.

Major. I don't care! Go away! Can't you see there 's a cricket match on?

[Mr. Butler hurries in from the Green, anxiously looking at his watch. He glances up and sees the waiting Chauffeur.]

Mr. Butler. Ah! There you are! *[He turns to the Major.]* What a pity it is!

Major. *[Aghast.]* But—but good heavens! You're not going.

Mr. Butler. It 's half-past five.

Mr. Twigg. Oh—but, Mr. Butler! Six runs to get—and the match to win! You—you *can't* go!

Mr. Butler. I 'm awfully sorry, but I did definitely say half-past five, didn't I? Business *must* come before games.

Major. Yes, but not in a crisis like this. Don't you realize—we haven't beaten these blighters for four years, and now all we want are six runs.

Mr. Butler. You 'll get those without my help.

Major. How do we know? Morgan's very uncertain—he may be out first ball.

Mr. Twigg. *[Looking through the opening.]* Look out! Morgan's taking his first ball! I hope to goodness he keeps his head.

[They creep stealthily to the opening and gaze out on to the Green. Mr. Butler, despite himself, is drawn with them—the Chauffeur sidles over and watches too.]

Major. Look! He's going to swipe! Oh, the fool——!

[His words fade away. There comes the crisp 'chock' of bat and ball, followed by an almost frenzied scream of delight which suddenly dies into something of a groan.]

Mr. Twigg. *[Excitedly pointing into the sky.]* Look! Look where it's gone! Right up there!

Major. The fool! The idiot! I told him not to hit blindly like that. Look! there's a fielder there—he'll catch it—he'll catch it—oh—Morgan—you fool——

[A Fielder has crept into view, gazing intently into the sky, his hands stretched up with open palms.]

Mr. Twigg. Look at the height it's gone! Oh, look, it's stopped going up! It's coming down! He'll catch it—oh, I can't bear it!

[Mr. Twigg turns into the marquee and covers his face with his hands, moaning slightly. The others watch, fascinated, petrified—the ball comes hurtling down into the Fielder's hands—and bounces out—there is a shriek of delight and laughter, cheers, and one or two catcalls. The small Boys suddenly reappear, and dance in front of Mr. Rogers, shutting out his view. Mr. Rogers rises in a fury and cuffs the Boys out of sight. The laughter and cheers continue—someone shouts out 'Butter-fingers!']

Major. Look—it's going over the boundary!

Mr. Butler. [*Excitedly.*] He'll just catch it in time!

Major. No, he won't!

Chauffeur. He's got it!

Major. It's over! Hurrah! Four—four! [*He turns to the scorers.*] Put down 4 to Morgan! Oh—but that was a wild, dangerous hit. [*He turns to Mr. Butler.*] Two more and we've won—two more!

[*Mr. Twigg has furtively uncovered his face. He turns round.*]

Mr. Twigg. Did he catch it?

[*No one replies. Apparently another ball is about to be bowled; every one's eyes are riveted on the Green.*]

Major. Look—he's taking another ball! Heavens! He's going to swipe again! Oh—the fool—— [*There is a click of bails—a groan from the Green. Hoarsely.*] He's out! Morgan's out!

[*Dickie hurries in from the Green.*]

Dickie Is Mr. Butler here? [*He sees Mr. Butler.*] Thank goodness! I had an awful feeling you might have gone. It's frightfully decent of you to stay, sir—we all realize what you're doing for us.

Chauffeur. It's twenty to, sir—we'll never do Winchester in less than a quarter of an hour.

Major. Oh, for God's sake, go away! Go away and puncture yourself! Mr. Butler isn't going.

Mr. Butler. But, Major—I can't——

Major. I know you can't!

Mr. Butler. I mean I can't stay.

[Mr. Twigg seizes a pair of pads and throws one to Dickie.]

Mr. Twigg. Quick! Put his pads on!

[Dickie and Mr. Twigg kneel down in front of Mr. Butler and feverishly strap the pads on his legs. Mr. Butler stands in helpless indecision. The Major addresses him.]

Major. Can you stand there, Mr. Butler, with English blood in your veins, and desert a cricket team—with two runs to win?

[Mr. Butler turns to the Chauffeur.]

Mr. Butler. You'll have to wait.

[The Chauffeur touches his cap and disappears to watch the cricket.]

Major. You won't regret this, Mr. Butler. As captain of the team I shall propose you as a vice-president at the next meeting.

Mr. Butler. That's very good of you, Major.

[Mr. Twigg and Dickie complete the strapping on of Mr. Butler's pads, while feverish activity passes outside.]

Mr. Rogers has instructed the Boy to put up the score: '92 for 9. Last man 4.' The red-headed Batsman has returned in dejected silence to the tent, with one or two half-hearted hand-claps and 'Ard luck, Ginger' from a tolerant friend outside.

There are anxious inquiries of 'Ninety-two, isn't it?'—'Two more to win?'—'Oh, my!' etc.

Major. The whole village looks to you now, Mr.

Butler. I'm certain you'll do it.

Mr. Butler. I'll do my best. I'm afraid I'm not much of a batsman.

[The Major thrusts a bat into his hands, Mr. Butler turns and grimly steps towards the Green. Dickie, the Major, and Mr. Twigg stand back a pace and clap their hands. The applause is taken up vigorously as Mr. Butler appears outside.]

Major. We can't be in suspense much longer now!

In a moment we shall know the worst.

Mr. Twigg. The best!

Major. Let's hope it'll be the best.

Mr. Twigg. Look! Mr. Butler's gone over to the Doctor!

Major. They're shaking hands! Splendid!

Dickie. They've changed over! They've put that fast bowler on again.

Major. It's a scandal to let that fellow bowl on this bumpy ground—it's murder. My elbow's aching like blazes—not sure if it hasn't cracked the bone.

Mr. Twigg. The Doctor's got to face it! Butler's this end. Look out! Here comes the bowler—doesn't he make awful faces!

[There is a moment of silence; the crack of bat and ball—and a cheer.]

Major. Good old Doctor! Right in the centre of the bat!

Mr. Twigg. Look at that fielder! It's gone between his legs! Run! Run!

Major. Oh, magnificent! We've tied! One more to win! One more!

Dickie. It's Butler's turn now.

Mr. Twigg. Oh, Butler—do—do make a run!

Major. Here comes the bowler! What a great hulking brute he is! [*There is a moment of deep stillness round the Green; then a crack, and a groan of pain.*] Heavens! It's got Butler on the knuckles!

Dickie. He's dropped his bat!

Mr. Twigg. He's doubling up!

Major. God! It must have hurt him!

[*The first groan of consternation on the Green has turned to a shout of excitement—a roar of applause.*]

Mr. Twigg. Look! Look! The ball's gone through the slips! It's gone to the boundary! Four! We've got it!

Major. We've won! [*All words are drowned in the hubbub from the Green; people are running towards the pitch.*] By gad! What a fine game the Doctor's played! Let's go and chair the old boy; he deserves it!

[*The Major runs out among the crowd, followed by Dickie and Mr. Twigg.*]

Rogers totally disregards the small Boys jump-

ing about in front of him; turns in triumph to the Scorer of the opposing team, and slaps him on the back so vigorously that the pipe shoots out of his mouth.

Mr. Rogers. Got you this time, Gilbert!

[He jumps up and follows the crowd. His small companion picks up his pipe and, relighting it, strolls out with a look of pitying contempt for such foolish excitement.

The confused turmoil goes on outside. Mr. Butler appears, sucking his knuckles and shaking them; he is followed by the Major and some of the team, who are slapping him on the back and congratulating him.

Major. Damn good show! Made the winning hit with your knuckles! Never mind, old boy, it was worth it! *[Confused cheers and excited laughter come from the opposite direction—the Major looks and shouts with laughter.]* Here comes the Doctor! Bravo!

[The Doctor appears, chaired on the shoulders of two sturdy Cricketers and surrounded by a little cheering crowd. The Major runs and helps to lower the Doctor to the ground. The Doctor crosses quickly to Mr. Butler, takes his hand, and gently examines his injured knuckles.

Doctor. I'm so sorry, Mr. Butler; it must have hurt you abominably! Why on earth didn't they give you any gloves?

Mr. Butler. That 's all right, Doctor.

Doctor. You must let me paint them with iodine.
I can't tell you how grateful we are. Isn't it fine—to win?

Mr. Butler. It 's been a great afternoon.

Doctor. You bowled splendidly! You really *must* play again [*He looks up and smiles.*] and bat with gloves next time! [*There is a pause. The Doctor is gently massaging Mr. Butler's injured hand.*] You *do* understand, don't you, what a pity it would be—if anything happened down here—to spoil all this?

Mr. Butler. That 's all right, Doctor.

[*The Doctor looks eagerly up at Mr. Butler.*]

Doctor. You mean that?

[*Mr. Butler nods and smiles. The Doctor has been massaging his injured knuckles. He gently presses his hand.*]

Mr. Butler. I shan't disturb you. I can build somewhere else.

Doctor. I 'm very glad.

[*The Major has been fussing impatiently round. He comes up to Mr. Butler and slaps him on the shoulder.*]

Major. Come along, Butler. We 'll soon put you right at the 'Blue Boar'!

Mr. Butler. May I stand the drinks?

Major. By Jove, you 're a sportsman! [*There are some calls for 'speech' outside. The Major goes to the entrance and addresses the crowd.*] Boys!

The Doctor's played the game of his life to-day! He's won the match with his pluck! I can't say any more, but three cheers for the president! [*Three ragged cheers burst out. The Doctor acknowledges them with a little wave of his hand. The Major adds:*] And now Mr. Butler wants to stand drinks all round! [*Mr. Butler is carried out on the crest of further cheers. The Major turns, laughing, to the Doctor, who has sunk down upon a little wooden bench. The Major crosses to him and begins to unstrap his pads.*] What a great day it's been! [*He sighs.*] If only it wasn't for this damned Butler business.

Doctor. [*Smiling.*] You needn't worry about that, Major——

Major. Why, how d' you mean?

Doctor. I've settled that. Mr. Butler's not going to disturb us here—he's going to build somewhere else.

Major. You don't mean it! [*The Doctor nods and smiles.*] By Gad, that's fine! How did you do it?

Doctor. [*Smiles artfully.*] Ah!

Major. Come along, let's go down to the 'Blue Boar' and celebrate!

Doctor. I think I'll rest here for a little while—you go on——

Major. No. I'll stay with you!

Doctor. No. You must. It's your duty to go.

Major. You deserve a rest, old boy. We 've done big things to-day.

[The Major goes away. The crowd has disappeared; their voices are growing faint across the Green.]

The small Scoring-boy comes in with the pile of numbers. He puts them on the table and turns, surprised to see the Doctor sitting there alone.

The Boy. I 've put all the numbers together, sir. I 'm sorry about that one I left behind last week.

Doctor. That 's all right, George.

[The Boy lingers at the door for a moment.]

The Boy. We got 'em beat this time, sir!

Doctor. Yes, we managed it this time.

[There is another little pause.]

The Boy. Good night, sir.

Doctor. Good night, George.

[The Boy goes away. The Doctor is alone. It is very quiet now; the sun is beginning to throw long shadows across the Green.]

THE PLAY ENDS



ACTING APPENDIX

(BY JOHN GARRETT)

THIS is a play about cricket. No match is seen on the stage itself, but the crack of bat and ball echoes throughout the third act. The game permeates the whole atmosphere: 'the smooth green—the great elms round it—the old houses peering out of the shade—the lovely quiet downs beyond—old Hobson's mare watching over a gate—people lying under the trees—the glorious firm "chock" of the ball against the bat. You won't forget it.' In such terms does Doctor Wetherby appeal to Mr. Butler, the vandal come from London to 'develop' the lovely village of Badger's Green, to play cricket for the village team. The game is shown as having its social significance, too. Perhaps his attachment to the game accounts for the kind geniality of the Doctor, and even if the Major is quite as enthusiastic if less amiable, then we must say that without cricket he would have been even less pleasant than he is. Cricket is shown as a force of goodwill in the community, so that when the capitalist builder has had the chance to see the Utopian spirit of village cricket in action, he forgoes his fell schemes and agrees to build elsewhere. The

ACTING APPENDIX

whole atmosphere is benign and serene, and even the rivalries of Doctor and Major are of Lilliputian dimensions. It is a different scene from Mr. Sherriff's earlier work *Journey's End*, the first considerable play about the wickedness of the Great War, and perhaps the most widely known dramatic work produced in our time. But though the tone is different the dramatic instinct is as sure, and *Badger's Green*, because it deals with emotions and values within the scope of boys' experience and understanding, is a first-rate work for schoolboy production.

CASTING

The most difficult part to cast is Mr. Twigg, and he will call for the resources of the best actor at your disposal. He is a pathetic, timid, little man whose lot it is to try to control personalities more forceful than his own. He has somehow to keep the peace between the Major and the Doctor, and a hard job of it he has. During the course of the play he has to develop, so that before the fall of the last curtain he is less bewildered and has become more sure of himself. The boy playing this part should not be too big, and yet he must not be insignificant, for it is essential that the audience should like him. Major

BADGER'S GREEN

Forrester, on the other hand, is an unsympathetic part and should be given to a boy of commanding voice and presence; one who is able to bluster and drown other points of view in noise. Doctor Wetherby is a very pleasant elderly gentleman, one whom every one admires. He has passed his life in doing good wherever he could and adding everywhere to the sum of human happiness. In casting these three parts it is necessary to bear in mind the necessity of vivid contrast of type as well as of physical characteristics. They are a trinity of ill-assorted opposites who try to present a united front to the enemy. Mr. Butler is a very ordinary likeable business man, with enough knowledge of the world and of human nature to outwit the three of them. He is no villain and neither is his secretary. Give her part to any boy capable of being made up to look tolerably pretty, and with a voice not yet broken. The only other woman's part, the maid-servant Mary, can be a country bumpkin of a girl. Dickie Wetherby will fall to the lot of some popular member of the school XI, and if he is himself on the stage he will need to do little more. Mr. Rogers will present a little difficulty. He is uneducated, inclined to sulk, and a little vulgar. But avoid the danger of overdoing his vulgarity and of giving him an accent you could cut with a knife. He might have dark hair, shiny with grease and parted in the middle. You will be well advised

ACTING APPENDIX

to avoid wigs as far as possible. Powder and a different parting from the usual will work wonders. All the costumes required are either in a boy's own wardrobe, or easily procurable from home.

SETTING

There are few problems here. The play has only one change of scene, and that can be effected in the interval. Doctor Wetherby's library is comfortable and homely, and what furniture you have room for must be solid and good. The word 'library' should not be interpreted too literally, for it is a room dedicated not so much to books as to comfortable living. An atmosphere of settled serenity through the years must be aimed at, for the Wetherbys have bought their goods and chattels for long service. Avoid all fussiness of detailed reproduction. If you have a picture let one suffice, and let it suggest the period and the man. Your setting has to be the setting for a play and never an end in itself. The attention of the audience should never be distracted from the play to exclamations of 'There now, that's just like Aunt Matilda's parlour at Bexhill.' A few properties chosen with care and imagination will do all that is necessary. Above all, omit anything which might hamper free movement on

BADGER'S GREEN

the stage, and see to it that your central door is really a practicable one. It would be a calamity if the table in Act II in its entry brought the scenery down with a crash. The tent setting in Act II will require some careful manipulation, but this is well within the range of schoolboy ingenuity. Care must be taken to have those people who are watching the match well within the vision of every one in the audience. All the excitement in this scene occurs off-stage, and if you cannot have the shifting expressions of exaltation and dismay on the faces of the chroniclers (for such they are) apparent to every one, the scene must fall flat. The lighting throughout must be bright, and you will have to concentrate some powerful flooding on the green grass (a green cloth stretched flat) visible through the opening of the tent. The whole effect must be one of brilliant sunshine, and because every character's face is brown with long days' cricketing in the sun, you will find invaluable number four grease-paint stick.

PRODUCTION

The production of a play must come from the school which tackles it, and no written instructions can hope to cover problems which are invariably peculiar and individual. I have pre-

ACTING APPENDIX

ferred to tabulate certain hints and warnings, the fruit of ten years of producing plays with schoolboys:

(1) Do not be in too much of a hurry to rid players of the copies of their words. As long as they are free within three weeks of the performance they gain confidence from the feeling that if their memory should fail help is handy.

(2) Avoid pauses at full stops of sentences in the same speech. The pace can be either slow or quick, but a pause is apt to confuse other actors. Do not ever sacrifice audibility for subtlety. You must be heard easily and distinctly.

(3) Never drop your voice at the end of a line. Rather let it rise. This is necessary partly to maintain pace, partly to give the cue.

(4) Every movement must have a definite meaning. Keep still unless you have something definite to do, revealing your interest in the expression of your face.

(5) Remember that all fussy half-gestures annoy an audience. If you have to express emotion, do not be content to cover your face with your hands, which is weak. Rather sink your head into your arms outstretched on the table, which is strong. Similarly in gesticulation do not bend your arm at the elbow. Stretch it out straight.

(6) Remember that the word a dramatist

BADGER'S GREEN

repeats has a special significance. Therefore find out what this is and change your voice accordingly.

(7) Introduce every possible contrast in tone and pace in delivering the speeches. When Doctor Wetherby is trying to find out from Mr. Twigg how he stands in relation to the Major in the estimation of the village, you will find that the pace has to vary with nearly every speech that is spoken. It is essential that the tempo should be varied throughout the play, strictly according to the nature of the scene and the meaning of the words spoken. For every speech you will have to imagine the state of the mind of which it is an expression. From such study you will find how your words should be spoken.

(8) Move in straight lines. Players who find movement difficult or who move too much or indirectly should be drilled with the old dance steps of: 1. 2. 3. turn; 1. 2. 3. turn.

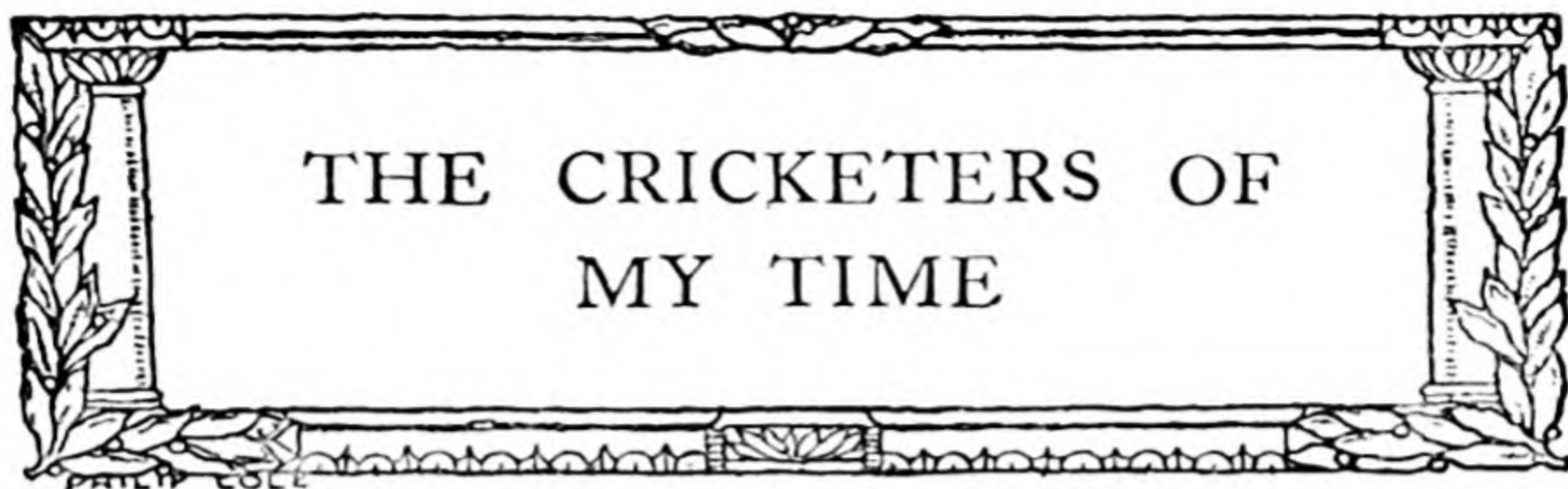
(9) Remember that the appropriate expression on the face should accompany the speech as it is spoken, and not achieved ten seconds later.

(10) Ensure that the cast do not regard the play as a jolly game, and demand from them at rehearsals and during the performance standards of professional discipline and silence.

THE CRICKETERS OF
MY TIME

JOHN NYREN'S book *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* and *The Cricketers of My Time* is the epic of a great game—perhaps the greatest of all games—for it tells of the game in its early, historic stage, when little Hambledon played all England upon the village green, known still as Broad Halfpenny. The book itself is a little classic, perhaps the sole classic of cricket, and though it was published over a hundred years ago, is as fresh and vigorous and inspiring as when it was just written.

This is what Leigh Hunt wrote in his review of *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* in 1834: 'It is a pity the reader cannot have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Nyren, as we have had. His appearance and general manner are as eloquent a testimony to the merits of his game as any that he has put upon paper. He is still a sort of youth at seventy, hale and vigorous, and with a merry twinkle in his eye: A long innings to him of life still, and to all friends round the wicket!'



THE CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

THE game of cricket is thoroughly British. Its derivation is probably from the Saxon *cryce*, 'a stick.' Strutt, however, in his *Sports and Pastimes*, states that he can find no record of the game, under its present appellation, 'beyond the commencement of the last century, where it occurs in one of the songs published by D'Urfey.'¹ The first four lines of 'Of a noble race was Shenken,' ran thus:

Her was the prettiest fellow
At foot-ball or at *cricket*,
At hunting chase, or nimble race,
How featly her could prick it.

The same historian of our games doubts not that cricket derived its origin from the ancient game of club-ball, the patronymics of which being compounded of Welsh and Danish (*clwppa* and *bol*) do not warrant his conclusion, the Saxon being an elder occupant of our island. The circumstance, however, of there being no illustration extant—no missal, illuminated with a group engaged in this king of athletic games, as is the case with its plebeian brother, the club-ball; also, from its

¹ *Pills to purge Melancholy*, 4th edit. 1719, vol. ii, p. 172.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

constitution, being of a more civil and complicated character—we may rationally infer that it is the offspring of a more polite, at all events of a maturer, age than its fellow. The game of club-ball appears to have been no other than the present well-known bat-and-ball, which, with similar laws and customs prescribed in the playing at it, was, doubtless, anterior to trap-ball. The trap, indeed, carries with it an air of refinement in the 'march of mechanism.'

They who are acquainted with some of the remote and unfrequented villages of England, where the primitive manners, customs, and games of our ancestors survive in the perfection of rude and unadulterated simplicity, must have remarked the lads playing at a game which is the same in its outline and principal features as the consummate piece of perfection that at this day is the glory of Lord's, and the pride of English athletæ—I mean the one in which a single stick is appointed for a wicket, ditto for a bat, and the same repeated, of about three inches in length, for a ball. If this be not the original of the game of cricket, it is a plebeian imitation of it.

My purpose, however, is not to search into the antiquities of cricketing, but to record my recollections of some of the most eminent professors of my favourite pastime who have figured on the public arena since the year 1776, when I might be about twelve years of age. From that period till within

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

a few seasons past, I have constantly been 'at the receipt of custom' when any rousing match has been toward; and being now a veteran, and laid up in ordinary, I may be allowed the vanity of the quotation:

Quorum magna pars fui.¹

I was born at Hambledon, in Hampshire—the *Attica* of the scientific art I am celebrating. No eleven in England could compare with the Hambledon, which met on the first Tuesday in May on Broad Halfpenny. So renowned a set were the men of Hambledon, that the whole country round would flock to see one of their trial matches. 'Great men,' indeed, 'have been among us—better, none'; and in the course of my recollections I shall have occasion to instance so many within the knowledge of persons now living, as will, I doubt not, warrant me in giving the palm to my native place.

The two principal bowlers in my early days were THOMAS BRETT and RICHARD NYREN, of Hambledon; the *corps de réserve*, or change-bowlers, were BARBER and HOGSFLESH. Brett was, beyond all comparison, the fastest as well as

¹ I learned a little Latin when I was a boy of a worthy old Jesuit, but I was a better hand at the fiddle; and many a time have I taught the gipsies a tune during their annual visits to our village, thereby purchasing the security of our poultry-yard. When the hand of the destroyer was stretched forth over the neighbouring roosts, our little Goshen was always passed by.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

straightest bowler that was ever known: he was neither a thrower nor a jerker, but a legitimate downright *bowler*, delivering his ball fairly, high, and very quickly, quite as strongly as the jerkers, and with the force of a point-blank shot. He was a well-grown, dark-looking man, remarkably strong, and with rather a short arm. As a batter, he was comparatively an inferior player—a slashing hitter, but he had little guard of his wicket, and his judgment of the game was held in no great estimation. Brett, whose occupation was that of a farmer, bore the universal character of a strictly honourable man in all his transactions, whether in business or in amusement.

Richard Nyren was left-handed. He had a high delivery, always to the length, and his balls were provokingly deceitful. He was the chosen General of all the matches, ordering and directing the whole. In such esteem did the brotherhood hold his experience and judgment, that he was uniformly consulted on all questions of law or precedent; and I never knew an exception to be taken against his opinion, or his decision to be reversed. I never saw a finer specimen of the thoroughbred old English yeoman than Richard Nyren. He was a good face-to-face, unflinching, uncompromising, independent man. He placed a full and just value upon the station he held in society, and he maintained it without insolence or assumption. He could differ with a superior,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

without trenching upon his dignity, or losing his own. I have known him maintain an opinion with great firmness against the Duke of Dorset and Sir Horace Mann; and when, in consequence of his being proved to be in the right, the latter has afterwards crossed the ground and shaken him heartily by the hand. Nyren had immense advantage over Brett; for, independently of his general knowledge of the game, he was practically a better cricketer, being a safe batsman and an excellent hitter. Although a very stout man (standing about five feet nine) he was uncommonly active. He owed all the skill and judgment he possessed to an old uncle, Richard Newland, of Slindon, in Sussex, under whom he was brought up—a man so famous in his time, that when a song was written in honour of the Sussex cricketers, Richard Newland was especially and honourably signalized. No one man ever dared to play him. When Richard Nyren left Hambleton, the club broke up, and never resumed from that day. The head and right arm were gone.

Barber and Hogsflesh were both good hands; they had a high delivery, and a generally good length; not very strong, however, at least for those days of playing, when the bowling was all fast. These four were our tip-top men, and I think such another stud was not to be matched in the whole kingdom, either before or since. They were choice fellows, staunch and thorough-

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

going. No thought of treachery ever seemed to have entered their heads. The modern politics of trickery and 'crossing' were (so far as my own experience and judgment of their actions extended) as yet 'a sealed book' to the Hamble-donians; what they did, they did for the love of honour and victory; and when one (who shall be nameless) sold the birthright of his good name for a mess of pottage, he paid dearly for his bargain. It cost him the trouble of being a knave—(no trifle!); the esteem of his old friends, and, what was worst of all, the respect of him who could have been his *best* friend—himself.

Upon coming to the old batters of our club, the name of JOHN SMALL, the elder, shines among them in all the lustre of a star of the first magnitude. His merits have already been recorded in a separate publication, which every zealous brother of the pastime has possibly read. I need, therefore, only subscribe my testimony to his uncommon talent, shortly summing up his chief excellencies. He was the best short runner of his day, and indeed I believe him to have been the first who turned the short hits to account. His decision was as prompt as his eye was accurate in calculating a short run. Add to the value of his accomplishment as a batter, he was an admirable fieldsman, always playing middle wicket; and so correct was his judgment of the game, that old Nyren would appeal to him when a point of law

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

was being debated. Small was a remarkably well-made and well-knit man, of honest expression, and as active as a hare.

He was a good fiddler, and taught himself the double bass. The Duke of Dorset having been informed of his musical talent, sent him as a present a handsome violin, and paid the carriage. Small, like a true and simple-hearted Englishman, returned the compliment, by sending his Grace two bats and balls, also *paying the carriage*. We may be sure that on both hands the presents were choice of their kind. Upon one occasion he turned his Orphean accomplishment to good account. Having to cross two or three fields on his way to a musical party, a vicious bull made at him; when our hero, with the characteristic coolness and presence of mind of a good cricketer, began playing upon his bass, to the admiration and perfect satisfaction of the mischievous beast.

About this time, 1778, I became a sort of farmer's pony to my native club of Hambledon, and I never had cause to repent the work I was put to; I gained by it that various knowledge of the game, which I leave in the hands of those who knew me in my 'high and palmy state' to speak to and appreciate. This trifling preliminary being settled, the name and figure of TOM SUETER first comes across me—a Hambledon man, and of the club. What a handful of steel-hearted soldiers are in an important pass, such was Tom in keeping

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

the wicket. Nothing went by him; and for coolness and nerve in this trying and responsible post, I never saw his equal. As a proof of his quickness and skill, I have numberless times seen him stump a man out with Brett's tremendous bowling. Add to this valuable accomplishment, he was one of the manliest and most graceful of hitters. Few would cut a ball harder at the point of the bat, and he was, moreover, an excellent short runner. He had an eye like an eagle—rapid and comprehensive. He was the first who departed from the custom of the old players before him, who deemed it a heresy to leave the crease for the ball; he would get in at it, and hit it straight off and straight on; and, egad! it went as if it had been fired. As by the rules of our club, at the trial matches no man was allowed to get more than thirty runs, he generally gained his number earlier than any of them. I have seldom seen a handsomer man than Tom Sueter, who measured about five feet ten. As if, too, Dame Nature wished to show at his birth a specimen of her prodigality, she gave him so amiable a disposition, that he was the pet of all the neighbourhood; so honourable a heart, that his word was never questioned by the gentlemen who associated with him; and a voice, which for sweetness, power, and purity of tone (a tenor), would, with proper cultivation, have made him a handsome fortune. With what rapture have I hung upon his notes when he has given us a

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

hunting song in the club-room after the day's practice was over!

GEORGE LEAR, of Hambledon, who always answered to the title among us of 'Little George,' was our best long-stop. So firm and steady was he, that I have known him stand through a whole match against Brett's bowling, and not lose more than two runs. The ball seemed to go into him, and he was as sure of it as if he had been a sand-bank. His activity was so great, and, besides, he had so good a judgment in running to cover the ball, that he would stop many that were hit in the slip, and this, be it remembered, from the swiftest bowling ever known. The portion of ground that man would cover was quite extraordinary. He was a good batsman, and a tolerably sure guard of his wicket; he averaged from fifteen to twenty runs, but I never remember his having a long innings. What he did not bring to the stock by his bat, however, he amply made up with his perfect fielding. Lear was a short man, of a fair complexion, well-looking, and of a pleasing aspect. He had a sweet counter-tenor voice. Many a treat have I had in hearing him and Sueter join in a glee at the 'Bat and Ball' on Broad Halfpenny:

I have been there, and still would go;
'Twas like a little heaven below!

EDWARD ABURROW, a native of Hambledon, was one of our best long fields. He always went

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

by the name of Curry; why, I cannot remember, neither is it of the utmost importance to inquire. He was well calculated for the post he always occupied, being a sure and strong thrower, and able to cover a great space of the field. He was a steady and safe batter, averaging the same number of runs as Lear. We reckoned him a tolerably good change for bowling. Aburrow was a strong and well-made man, standing about five feet nine; he had a plain, honest-looking face, and was beloved by all his acquaintance.

BUCK, whose real name was PETER STEWARD, is the next Hambledon man that occurs to my recollection. He, too, played long field, and was a steady man at his post; his batting, too, reached the same pitch of excellence; he could cut the balls very hard at the point of the bat—nothing like Sueter, however—very few could have equalled *him*. Buck was a dark-looking man, a shoemaker by trade, in height about five feet eight, rather slimly built, and very active. He had an ambition to be thought a humorist. The following anecdote may serve both as a specimen of his talent, and of the unfastidious taste of the men of Hambledon. When a match was to be played at a distance, the whole eleven, with the umpire and scorer, were conveyed in one caravan, built for their accommodation. Upon one occasion, the vehicle having been overturned, and the whole cargo unshipped, Buck remained at his post,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

and refused to come out, desiring that they would right the vessel with him in it; for that 'one good turn deserved another.' This repartee was admired for a week.

The following old-fashioned song, and which was very popular fifty years ago, may bring back pleasant recollections to those of my countrymen who remember the Hambledon Club in the year 1778:

CRICKET

BY THE REV. MR. COTTON, OF WINCHESTER

Assist, all ye Muses, and join to rehearse
An old English sport, never praised yet in verse:
'Tis Cricket I sing, of illustrious fame,
No nation e'er boasted so noble a game.
Derry down, etc.

Great Pindar has bragg'd of his heroes of old—
Some were swift in the race, some in battles were bold;
The brows of the victor with olives were crown'd:
Hark! they shout, and Olympia returns the glad sound!
Derry down, etc.

What boasting of Castor and Pollux his brother—
The one famed for riding, for boxing the other;
Compared with our heroes, they 'll not shine at all—
What were Castor and Pollux to Nyren and Small?
Derry down, etc.

Here's guarding and catching, and throwing and tossing,
And bowling and striking, and running and crossing;
Each mate must excel in some principal part—
The Pentathlum of Greece could not show so much art.
Derry down, etc.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

The parties are met, and array'd all in white—
Famed Elis ne'er boasted so pleasing a sight;
Each nymph looks askew at her favourite swain,
And views him, half stript, both with pleasure and pain.
Derry down, etc.

The wickets are pitch'd now, and measured the ground;
Then they form a large ring, and stand gazing around—
Since Ajax fought Hector, in sight of all Troy,
No contest was seen with such fear and such joy.
Derry down, etc.

Ye bowlers, take heed, to my precepts attend:
On you the whole fate of the game must depend;
Spare your vigour at first, now exert all your strength,
But measure each step, and be sure pitch a length.
Derry down, etc.

Ye fieldsmen, look sharp, lest your pains ye beguile;
Move close like an army, in rank and in file;
When the ball is return'd, back it sure, for I trow,
Whole states have been ruin'd by one overthrow.
Derry down, etc.

Ye strikers, observe when the foe shall draw nigh;
Mark the bowler, advancing with vigilant eye;
Your skill all depends upon distance and sight,
Stand firm to your scratch, let your bat be upright.
Derry down, etc.

And now the game's o'er, IO victory! rings,
Echo doubles her chorus, and Fame spreads her wings;
Let's now hail our champions all steady and true,
Such as Homer ne'er sung of, nor Pindar e'er knew.
Derry down, etc.

Buck, Curry, and Hogsflesh, and Barber and Brett,
Whose swiftness in bowling was ne'er equalled yet;

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

I had almost forgot, they deserve a large bumper;
Little George, the long-stop, and Tom Sueter, the
stumper.

Derry down, etc.

Then why should we fear either Sackville or Mann,
Or repine at the loss both of Boynton and Lann?—
With such troops as those we 'll be lords of the game,
Spite of Minshull and Miller, and Lumpy and Frame,
Derry down, etc.

Then fill up your glass, he 's the best that drinks most.
Here 's the Hambledon Club!—who refuses the toast?
Let 's join in the praise of the bat and the wicket,
And sing in full chorus the patrons of cricket.
Derry down, etc.

And when the game 's o'er, and our fate shall draw nigh
(For the heroes of cricket, like others, must die),
Our bats we 'll resign, neither troubled nor vex'd,
And give up our wickets to those that come next.
Derry down, etc.

The tenth knight of our round table (of which old Richard Nyren was the King Arthur), was a man we always called 'The Little Farmer'; his name was LAMBERT. He was a bowler—right-handed, and he had the most extraordinary delivery I ever saw. The ball was delivered quite low, and with a twist; not like that of the generality of right-handed bowlers, but just the reverse way: that is, if bowling to a right-handed hitter, his ball would twist from the off-stump into the leg. He was the first I remember who introduced this deceitful and teasing style of delivering the

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

ball. When all England played the Hambledon Club, the Little Farmer was appointed one of our bowlers; and, egad! this new trick of his so bothered the Kent and Surrey men, that they tumbled out one after another, as if they had been picked off by a rifle corps. For a long time they could not tell what to make of that cursed twist of his. This, however, was the only virtue he possessed, as a cricketer. He was no batter, and had no judgment of the game. The perfection he had attained in this one department, and his otherwise general deficiency, are at once accounted for by the circumstance, that when he was tending his father's sheep, he would set up a hurdle or two, and bowl away for hours together. Our General, old Nyren, after a great deal of trouble (for the Farmer's comprehension did not equal the speed of lightning), got him to pitch the ball a little to the off-side of the wicket, when it would twist full in upon the stumps. Before he had got into this knack, he was once bowling against the Duke of Dorset, and, delivering his ball straight to the wicket, it curled in, and missed the Duke's leg-stump by a hair's-breadth. The plain-spoken little bumpkin, in his eagerness and delight, and forgetting the style in which we were always accustomed to impress our aristocratical play-mates with our acknowledgment of their rank and station, bawled out—'Ah! it was *tedious* near you, sir!' The familiarity of his tone, and the genuine

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

Hampshire dialect in which it was spoken, set the whole ground laughing. I have never seen but one *bowler* who delivered his balls in the same way as our little Farmer; with the *jerkers* the practice is not uncommon. He was a very civil and inoffensive young fellow, and remained in the club perhaps two or three seasons.

With TOM TAYLOR the old *eleven* was completed. There were, of course, several changes of other players, but these were the established picked set—the *élite*. Tom was an admirable field—certainly one of the very finest I ever saw. His station was between the point of the bat and the middle wicket, to save the two runs; but Tom had a lucky knack of gathering in to the wicket, for Tom had a licence from our old General; so that, if the ball was hit to him, he had so quick a way of meeting it, and with such a rapid return (for no sooner was it in his hand, than with the quickness of thought it was returned to the top of the wicket), that I have seen many put out by this manœuvre in a single run, and when the hit might be safely calculated upon for a prosperous one. He had an excellent general knowledge of the game; but of fielding, in particular, he was perfect both in judgment and practice. Tom was also a most brilliant hitter, but his great fault lay in not sufficiently guarding his wicket; he was too fond of cutting, at the point of the bat, balls that were delivered straight; although, therefore,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

he would frequently get many runs, yet, from this habit, he could not be securely depended on; and, indeed, it was commonly the cause of his being out. I have known Lord Frederick Beauclerc (certainly the finest batter of his day) throw away the chance of a capital innings by the same incaution—that of cutting at *straight* balls, and he has been bowled out in consequence. Taylor was a short, well-made man, strong, and as watchful and active as a cat; but in no other instance will the comparison hold good, for he was without guile, and was an attached friend.

Having now described the best of my native players, I proceed to their opponents; and the foremost man of all must stand the well-known bowler, LUMPY, whose real name was STEVENS. He was a Surrey man, and lived with Lord Tankerville. Beyond all the men within my recollection, Lumpy would bowl the greatest number of length balls in succession. His pace was much faster than Lord Beauclerc's, but he wanted his Lordship's general knowledge of the game. In those days it was the custom for the party going from home to pitch their own wickets; and here it was that Lumpy, whose duty it was to attend to this, always committed an error. He would invariably choose the ground where his balls would *shoot*, instead of selecting a rising spot to bowl against, which would have materially increased the difficulty to the hitter, seeing that so many more

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

would be caught out by the mounting of the ball. As nothing, however, delighted the old man like bowling a wicket down with a shooting ball, he would sacrifice the other chances to the glory of that achievement. Many a time have I seen our General twig this prejudice in the old man when matched against us, and chuckle at it. But I believe it was almost the only mistake he ever made professional, or even moral, for he was a most simple and amiable creature. Yes—one other he committed, and many a day after was the joke remembered against him. One of our matches having been concluded early in the day, a long, raw-boned devil of a countryman came up and offered to play any one of the twenty-two at single wicket for five pounds. Old Nyren told Lumpy it would be five pounds easily earned, and persuaded him to accept the challenge. Lumpy, however, would not stake the whole sum himself, but offered a pound of the money, and the rest was subscribed. The confident old bowler made the countryman go in first, for he thought to settle his business in a twink; but the fellow having an arm as long as a hop-pole, reached in at Lumpy's balls, bowl what length he might; and slashed and thrashed away in the most ludicrous style, hitting his balls all over the field, and always up in the air; and he made an uncommon number of runs from this prince of bowlers before he could get him out;—and, egad!

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

he beat him!—for when Lumpy went in, not being a good batter, while the other was a very fast bowler, all along the ground, and straight to the wicket, he knocked him out presently; the whole ring roaring with laughter, and the astounded old bowler swearing he would never play another single match as long as he lived—an oath, I am sure, he religiously observed, for he was confoundedly crestfallen. Lumpy was a short man, round-shouldered, and stout. He had no trick about him, but was as plain as a pike-staff in all his dealings.

FRAME was the other principal with Lumpy; a fast bowler, and an unusually stout man for a cricketer. I recollect very little of him, and nothing worthy of a formal record.

Besides him there was SHOCK WHITE, another bowler on the England side; a good change, and a very decent hitter; but take him altogether, I never thought very highly of his playing. He was a short and rather stoutly-made man.

JOHN WOOD made the fourth, and the other change bowler. He was tall, stout, and bony, and a very good general player; not, however, an extraordinary one, when compared with those that have been heretofore mentioned.

There was high feasting held on Broad Halfpenny during the solemnity of one of our grand matches. Oh! it was a heart-stirring sight to witness the multitude forming a complete and

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

dense circle round that noble green. Half the county would be present, and all their hearts with us—Little Hambledon, pitted against all England was a proud thought for the Hampshire men. Defeat was glory in such a struggle—victory, indeed, made us only ‘a little lower than angels.’ How those fine brawn-faced fellows of farmers would drink to our success! And then, what stuff they had to drink!—Punch!—not your new *Ponche à la Romaine*, or *Ponche à la Groseille*, or your modern cat-lap milk punch—punch be-devilled; but good, unsophisticated, John Bull stuff—stark!—that would stand on end—punch that would make a cat speak! Sixpence a bottle! We had not sixty millions of interest to pay in those days. The ale, too!—not the modern horror under the same name, that drives as many men melancholy-mad as the hypocrites do;—not the beastliness of these days, that will make a fellow’s inside like a shaking bog—and as rotten; but barley-corn, such as would put the souls of three butchers into one weaver. Ale that would flare like turpentine—genuine Boniface! This immortal viand (for it was more than liquor) was vended at twopence per pint. The immeasurable villainy of our vintners would, with their march of intellect (if ever they could get such a brewing), drive a pint of it out into a gallon. Then the quantity the fellows would eat! Two or three of them would strike dismay into a round of beef.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

They could no more have pecked in that style than they could have flown, had the infernal black stream (that type of Acheron!) which soddens the carcass of a Londoner, been the fertilizer of their clay. There would this company, consisting most likely of some thousands, remain patiently and anxiously watching every turn of fate in the game, as if the event had been the meeting of two armies to decide their liberty. And whenever a Hambledon man made a good hit, worth four or five runs, you would hear the deep mouths of the whole multitude baying away in pure Hampshire—'Go hard!—go hard!—*Tich* and turn!—*tich* and turn!' To the honour of my countrymen, let me bear testimony upon this occasion also, as I have already done upon others. Although their provinciality in general, and personal partialities individually, were naturally interested in behalf of the Hambledon men, I cannot call to recollection an instance of their wilfully stopping a ball that had been hit out among them by one of our opponents. Like *true* Englishmen, they would give an enemy fair play. How strongly are all those scenes, of fifty years by-gone, painted in my memory!—and the smell of that ale comes upon me as freshly as the new May flowers.

Having premised that these grand matches were always made for £500 a side, I now proceed with a slight record of the principal men who were usually pitted against us. My description

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

of them must unavoidably be less minute, because I had not so frequent an intercourse with them as with the men whose every action I was constantly in the habit of watching: my report of them, therefore, may be more slight than their merits deserve, for there were really some fine players among them. For the same reason also, my chronicle will be less relieved by personal anecdote.

My last account having closed with the four principal bowlers who were usually opposed to us—Lumpy and Frame, Shock White and Wood—the next name that presents itself to me is that of MINSHULL, who was a gardener to the Duke of Dorset. He was a batter, and a very fine one—probably their best; a capital hitter, and a sure guard of his wicket. Minshull, however, was not an elegant player; his position and general style were both awkward and uncouth; yet he was as conceited as a wagtail, and from his constantly aping what he had no pretensions to, was, on that account only, not estimated according to the price at which he had rated his own merits. He was a thick-set man, standing about five feet nine, and not very active.

MILLER (gamekeeper either to Lord Tankerville or the Duke of Dorset, I forgot which) was as amiable a hearted man as ever cut a ball at the point of the bat. He and Minshull were the only two batters the Hambledon men were afraid of. Miller was indeed a beautiful player, and always

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

to be depended on; there was no flash—no cock-a-hoop about him, but firm he was, and steady as the Pyramids. Although fully as stout a man as Minshull, he was considerably more active. I remember when upon one occasion those two men, being in together, had gained an uncommon number of runs, the backers of the Hambledon men, Dehaney and Paulet, began to quake, and edged off all their money, laying it pretty thickly on the England side. Of the Hambledon men, Small went in first, and continued until there were about five out, for very few runs, when Nyren went in to him; and then they began to show fight. The mettle of our true blood was roused into full action, and never did they exhibit to finer advantage. Nyren got 98, and Small 110 runs before they were parted. After the former was out (for Small, according to his custom, died a natural death) the backers came up to Nyren and said: 'You will win the match, and we shall lose our money.' The proud old yeoman turned short upon them, and, with that honest independence which gained him the esteem of all parties, told them to their heads that they were rightly served, and that he was glad of it. 'Another time' (said he) 'don't bet your money against such men as we are!' I forget how many runs the Hambledon men got, but, after this turn in affairs, the others stood no chance, and were easily beaten.

MAY and BOOKER, and QUIDDINGTON, were

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

players of the first rank, though not the first of that rank. They were excellent and steady batters, strong hitters, and sure fields. Quid-dington was a long-stop, and an admirable one; not, however, so implicitly to be depended on as Lear, whose equal in that department of the game I never saw anywhere. My reason for assigning him this superiority has been already given. For the same cause, too, I must place our Sueter above Yalden, who was their best wicket-keeper, and he would have been highly prized anywhere; but neither he nor Quiddington ever had to stand against such steam-engine bowling as Brett's; and yet Lear and Sueter, in their several departments, were safer men than their opponents. Yalden, too, was in other respects an inferior man to Sueter. His word was not always to be depended on when he had put a man out—he would now and then shuffle, and resort to trick. In such estimation did the other stand with all parties, so high an opinion had they of his honour—that I firmly believe they would have trusted to his decision, had he ever chosen to question that of the umpire. Yalden was not a fine, but a very useful and steady batter. He was a thin, dark-looking man.

The DUKE OF DORSET, or LORD TANKERVILLE, sometimes both, would play, to complete the eleven. Neither of these noblemen was to be compared to Lord Frederick Beauclerc. Whether

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

in batting, bowling, or indeed in any department of the game, he would have distanced them; yet they were pretty players. Each usually played in the slip when the other was not present. This station was the Duke's forte. He was in height about five feet nine, very well made, and had a peculiar habit, when unemployed, of standing with his head on one side.

About the period I have been describing, NOAH MANN joined the Hambledon Club. He was from Sussex, and lived at North Chapel, not far from Petworth. He kept an inn there, and used to come a distance of at least twenty miles every Tuesday to practise. He was a fellow of extraordinary activity, and could perform clever feats of agility on horseback. For instance, when he has been seen in the distance coming up the ground, one or more of his companions would throw down handkerchiefs, and these he would collect, stooping from his horse while it was going at full speed. He was a fine batter, a fine field, and the swiftest runner I ever remember; indeed, such was his fame for speed, that whenever there was a match going forward, we were sure to hear of one being made for Mann to run against some noted competitor; and such would come from the whole country round. Upon these occasions he used to tell his friends, 'If, when we are half-way, you see me alongside of my man, you may always bet your money upon me, for I am sure to win.'

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

And I never saw him beaten. He was a most valuable fellow in the field; for besides being very sure of the ball, his activity was so extraordinary that he would dart all over the ground like lightning. In those days of fast bowling, they would put a man behind the long-stop, that he might cover both long-stop and slip: the man always selected for this post was Noah. Now and then little George Lear (whom I have already described as being so fine a long-stop), would give Noah the wink to be on his guard, who would gather close behind him: then George would make a slip on purpose, and let the ball go by, when, in an instant, Noah would have it up, and into the wicket-keeper's hands, and the man was put out. This I have seen done many times, and this nothing but the most accomplished skill in fielding could have achieved.

Mann would, upon occasion, be employed as a change-bowler, and in this department he was very extraordinary. He was left-handed, both as bowler and batter. In the former quality, his merit consisted in giving a curve to the ball the whole way. In itself it was not the first-rate style of bowling, but so very deceptive, that the chief end was frequently attained. They who remember the dexterous manner with which the Indian jugglers communicated the curve to the balls they spun round their heads, by a twist of the wrist or hand, will at once comprehend Noah's

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

curious feat in bowling. Sometimes when a batter had got into his hitting, and was scoring more runs than pleased our General, he would put Mann in to give him eight or twelve balls, and he almost always did so with good effect.

Noah was a good batsman, and a most severe hitter; by the way, I have observed this to be a common quality in left-handed men. The writer of this was in with him at a match on Windmill Down, when by one stroke from a toss that he hit behind him, we got ten runs. At this time the playing-ground was changed from Broad Halfpenny to the above-named spot, at the suggestion of the Duke of Dorset and the other gentlemen, who complained of the bleakness of the old place. The alteration was in this, as in every other respect, for the better, Windmill Down being one of the finest places for playing on I ever saw. The ground gradually declined every way from the centre; the fieldsmen therefore were compelled to look about them, and for this reason they became so renowned in that department of the game.

At a match of the Hambledon Club against all England, the club had to go in to get the runs, and there was a long number of them. It became quite apparent that the game would be closely fought. Mann kept on worrying old Nyren to let him go in, and although he became quite indignant at his constant refusal, our General

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

knew what he was about in keeping him back. At length, when the last but one was out, he sent Mann in, and there were then ten runs to get. The sensation now all over the ground was greater than anything of the kind I ever witnessed before or since. All knew the state of the game, and many thousands were hanging upon this narrow point. There was Sir Horace Mann, walking about, outside the ground, cutting down the daisies with his stick—a habit with him when he was agitated; the old farmers leaning forward upon their tall old staves, and the whole multitude perfectly still. After Noah had had one or two balls, Lumpy tossed one a little too far, when our fellow got in, and hit it out in his grand style. Six of the ten were gained. Never shall I forget the roar that followed this hit. Then there was dead stand for some time, and no runs were made; ultimately, however, he gained them all, and won the game. After he was out, he upbraided Nyren for not putting him in earlier. 'If you had let me go in an hour ago' (said he), 'I would have served them in the same way.' But the old tactician was right, for he knew Noah to be a man of such nerve and self-possession, that the thought of so much depending upon him would not have the paralysing effect that it would upon many others. He was sure of him, and Noah afterwards felt the compliment. Mann was short in stature, and, when stripped, as swarthy as a

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

gipsy. He was all muscle, with no encumbrance whatever of flesh; remarkably broad in the chest, with large hips and spider legs; he had not an ounce of flesh about him, but it was where it ought to be. He always played without his hat (the sun could not affect *his* complexion), and he took a liking to me as a boy, because I did the same. Poor Noah! his death was a very deplorable one. Having been out shooting all day with some friends, they finished their evening with a free carouse, and he could not be persuaded to go to bed, but persisted in sleeping all night in his chair in the chimney-corner. It was, and still is, the custom in that part of the country, to heap together all the ashes on the hearth, for the purpose of keeping the fire in till the next day. During the night my poor playmate fell upon the embers, and being unable to help himself, burned his side so severely that he did not survive twenty-four hours.

RICHARD FRANCIS was a Surrey man. One day I met him in the street of Hambledon, and ran to tell our General that the famous Francis had come to live among us; he could scarcely believe me — perhaps for joy. This was the luckiest thing that could have happened for us, for Brett had just about the same time left off playing. Francis was a fast *jerk*; but though his delivery was allowed to be fair bowling, still it was a jerk. We enlisted him immediately, for

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

we all knew what he could do, having seen him play on the Surrey side against us. At that time he was a young man, and he remained many years in the club. He was a gamekeeper; a closely-made, firm little man, and active. His batting did not deserve any marked praise, still we always set him down for a few runs. He was both a better batter, however, and field too, than Brett; but as a bowler, he ranked many degrees below that fine player.

About the same period RICHARD PURCHASE joined us. He was a slowish bowler—rather faster than Lord Beauclerc. His balls got up uncommonly well, and they were generally to a length. But he had no cunning about him; nor was he up to the tricks of the game—in playing, as in all other actions in life, he was the same straightforward honest fellow. Purchase was a fair hitter, and a tolerably good field. He was a slightly-made man, and of a dark complexion.

At this great distance from the period at which my recollections of cricketing commenced, and having no data by which to regulate them, the reader will good-naturedly make allowance both for the desultory character of my records, their unfinished and hasty sketchiness, and also for my now and then retracing my steps, to include some circumstance which, at the time of writing, had escaped my memory. For instance, I should have chronicled the era when the old-fashioned wicket

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

of *two* stumps was changed to *three*—a decided improvement, seeing that it multiplied the chances to the batter of being bowled out, consequently increased the difficulty of his position, and thereby exalted his maintaining it for any length of time into the greater merit; for, under the old system, if the ball passed between the stumps, the batter was not considered out; under the improved system, such an event cannot happen, for the three stumps are not pitched at so great a distance from each other as to allow of the transit of the ball without knocking off the bail. This explanation is, of course, addressed only to the young and inexperienced player. The important reform in the game here alluded to took place, according to the best of my recollection, about the year 1779 or 1780. Since that time other entrenchments have been made upon the old constitution, which was the pride of our ancestors and the admiration of the whole community; but which, so far from contributing to its stability, will, in my opinion, if not retrieved, not only essentially change, but even destroy its character; let the patrician legislators and guardians of cricket-law look to it.

Before I proceed with my catalogue of the Hambledon Pantheon, it may be worth while to mention a circumstance connected with poor Noah Mann, the player named a few pages back. As it will tend to show the amenity in which the

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

men of lower grade in society lived in those good old times with their superiors, it may prove no worthless example to the more aristocratic, and certainly less beloved members of the same rank in society of the present day. Poor Noah was very ambitious that his new-born son should bear the Christian name, with the sanction of his namesake, Sir Horace Mann. Old Nyren, who, being the link between the patricians and plebeians in our community—the *juste milieu*—was always applied to in cases of similar emergency, undertook, upon the present occasion, to bear the petition of Noah to Sir Horace, who, with a winning condescension, acceded to the worthy fellow's request, and consented to become godfather to the child, giving it his own name; adding, I have no doubt, a present suited to the station of his little protégé. How easy a thing it is to win the esteem of our inferiors; and how well worth the while, when the mutual pleasure only, resulting from the action, is considered! Sir Horace, by this simple act of graceful humanity, hooked for life the heart of poor Noah Mann; and in this world of hatred and contention, the love even of a dog is worth living for.

The next player I shall name is JAMES AYLWARD. His father was a farmer. After he had played with the club for a few years, Sir Horace got him away from us, and made him his bailiff, I think, or some such officer; I remember,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

however, he was but ill qualified for his post. Aylward was a left-handed batter, and one of the safest hitters I ever knew in the club. He once stayed in two whole days, and upon that occasion got the highest number of runs that had ever been gained by any member—*one hundred and sixty-seven!* Jemmy was not a good fieldsman, neither was he remarkably active. After he had left us, to go down to live with Sir Horace, he played against us, but never to my recollection, with any advantage to his new associates—the Hamble-donians were almost always too strong for their opponents. He was introduced to the club by Tom Taylor, and Tom's anxiety upon the occasion, that his friend should do credit to his recommendation, was curiously conspicuous. Aylward was a stout, well-made man, standing about five feet nine inches; not very light about the limbs, indeed he was rather clumsy. He would sometimes affect a little grandeur of manner, and once got laughed at by the whole ground for calling for a lemon to be brought to him when he had been in but a little while. It was thought a piece of finikinness by those simple and homely yeomen.

And now for those anointed clod-stumpers, the WALKERS, TOM and HARRY. Never sure came two such unadulterated rustics into a civilized community. How strongly are the figures of the men (of Tom's in particular) brought to my mind when they first presented themselves to the club,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

upon Windmill Down. Tom's hard, ungain, scrag-of-mutton frame; wilted, apple-john face (he always looked twenty years older than he really was), his long spider legs, as thick at the ankles as at the hips, and perfectly straight all the way down—for the embellishment of a calf in Tom's leg, Dame Nature had considered would be but a wanton superfluity. Tom was the driest and most rigid-limbed chap I ever knew; his skin was like the rind of an old oak, and as sapless. I have seen his knuckles handsomely knocked about from Harris's bowling; but never saw any blood upon his hands—you might just as well attempt to phlebotomize a mummy. This rigidity of muscle (or rather I should say of tendon, for muscle was another ingredient economized in the process of Tom's configuration)—this rigidity, I say, was carried into every motion. He moved like the rude machinery of a steam-engine in the infancy of construction, and when he ran, every member seemed ready to fly to the four winds. He toiled like a tar on horseback. The uncouth actions of these men furnished us, who prided ourselves upon a certain grace in movement and finished air, with an everlasting fund of amusement, and for some time they took no great fancy to me, because I used to worry, and tell them they could not play. They were, however, good hands when they first came among us, and had evidently received most excellent instruction; but after they

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

had derived the advantage of first-rate practice, they became most admirable batters, and were the trustiest fellows (particularly Tom) in cases of emergency or difficulty. They were devilish troublesome customers to get out. I have very frequently known Tom to go in first and remain to the very last man. He was the coolest, the most imperturbable fellow in existence: it used to be said of him that he had no nerves at all. Whether he was only practising, or whether he knew that the game was in a critical state, and that much depended upon his play, he was the same phlegmatic, unmoved man—he was the Washington of cricketers. Neither he nor his brother was active, yet both were effective fieldsmen. Upon one occasion, on the Mary-le-bone grounds, I remember Tom going in first, and Lord Frederick Beauclerc giving him the first four balls all of an excellent length. First four or last four made no difference to Tom—he was always the same cool, collected fellow. Every ball he dropped down just before his bat. Off went his lordship's white hat—dash upon the ground (his constant action when disappointed)—calling him at the same time 'a confounded old beast.'—'I doant care what ee zays,' said Tom, when one close by asked if he had heard Lord Frederick call him 'an old beast.' No, no; Tom was not the man to be flustered.

About a couple of years after Walker had been

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

with us, he began the system of throwing instead of bowling, now so much the fashion. At that time it was esteemed foul play, and so it was decided by a council of the Hambledon Club, which was called for the purpose. The first I recollect seeing revive the custom was Wells, a Sussex man. I am decidedly of opinion, that if it be not stopped altogether, the character of the game will become changed. I should hope that such powerful and efficient members of the Marylebone Club, as Mr. Ward, etc., will determine, not only to discountenance, but wholly and finally to suppress it; and instead, to foster and give every encouragement to genuine, bona fide bowlers—men with a fine delivery.

I never thought much of Tom's bowling; indeed the bowling of that time was so supereminent, that he was not looked upon as a bowler—even for a change. He afterwards, however, greatly improved; and what with his thorough knowledge of the game, his crafty manner (for he was one of the most fox-headed fellows I ever saw), and his quickness in seizing every advantage, he was of considerable service to his party, but he never was a first-rate bowler. He was a right- and Harry a left-handed batter, and both were valuable men. They came from Thursley, near Hindhead; they and their father were farmers, and their land lay near to the Devil's Punch-bowl.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

The next in succession will be JOHN WELLS, the BELDHAMS, HARRIS, and FREEMANTLE.

Shortly after the Walkers had joined us, JOHN WELLS became a member of the Hambledon Club. John lived at Farnham, in Surrey, and was, if I recollect, a baker by trade. He was a short, thick, well-set man; in make like a cob-horse, proportionately strong, active, and laborious. As a bowler, he had a very good delivery; he was also a good general field, and a steady batter—in short, an excellent ‘servant of all work’; and, like those misused Gibeonites (‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’), he was never spared when a wear-and-tear post was to be occupied. In cricket, as in the graver pursuits in life, the willing workman is ever spurred; he may perform labours of supererogation, and his assiduity meets at best with ‘mouth honour’: let him, however, but relax his muscles—let him but shorten his career to the speed of his fellows, and he instantly sinks below them in the estimation of his employers. Whether in this case, the feeling arise from envy or not, it is hard to decide; assuredly, however, in very many instances, the mill-horse grinder in the track of duty is acknowledged with greeting, while extra merit ‘goes out sighing.’ John Wells possessed all the requisites for making a thoroughly useful cricketer; and in his general deportment, he was endowed with those qualities which render man useful to society as well as happy in himself.

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

He was a creature of a transparent and unflawed integrity — plain, simple, and candid; uncompromising, yet courteous: civil and deferential, yet no cringer. He always went by the title of 'Honest John Wells,' and as long as I knew him, he never forfeited the character he had gained. Little more need be added respecting his merits as a player, for he must be fresh in the memory of all who have been accustomed to see the best playing; suffice to say, that in addition to his level merits as a general cricketer, he was esteemed to possess an excellent judgment of the game, and in questions that were frequently mooted, his opinion would be appealed to.

The BELDHAMS, GEORGE and WILLIAM, come next in succession, brothers, and both farmers. They also with Wells came from Farnham. George was what would be called a fine player; a good batter, and generally competent to fill the different posts in the game; but as he attended the club a few times only during my stay in it, I am unable to discriminate or speak pointedly to his merits. Upon turning, however, to his brother William, we come to the finest batter of his own, or perhaps of any age. William Beldham was a close-set, active man, standing about five feet eight inches and a half. He had light-coloured hair, a fair complexion, and handsome as well as intelligent features. We used to call him 'Silver Billy.' No one within my recollection

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

could stop a ball better, or make more brilliant hits all over the ground. Wherever the ball was bowled, there she was hit away, and in the most severe, venomous style. Besides this, he was so remarkably safe a player; he was safer than the Bank, for no mortal ever thought of doubting Beldham's stability. He received his instructions from a gingerbread baker at Farnham, of the name of Harry Hall. I once played against Hall, and found him a very fair hand, yet nothing remarkable; he knew the principles of the game, yet, like many of inferior merit in performance, he made nevertheless an excellent tutor. He was a slow bowler, and a pretty good one. He had a peculiar habit of bringing his hand from behind his back immediately previous to his delivering the ball, a trick no doubt perplexing enough to an inexperienced batter. In his peripatetic lectures to the young students, Hall perpetually enforced the principle of keeping the *left* elbow well up (this charge was of course delivered to the *right*-handed hitters), and excellent instruction it was; for if you do keep that elbow well up, and your bat also upright (in stopping a *length-ball*), you will not fail to keep the balls *down*; and, vice versa, lower your elbow, and your balls will infallibly mount when you strike them.

BELDHAM was quite a young man when he joined the Hambledon Club; and even in that

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

stage of his playing, I hardly ever saw a man with a finer command of his bat; but, with the instruction and advice of the old heads super-added, he rapidly attained to the extraordinary accomplishment of being the finest player that has appeared within the latitude of more than half a century. There can be no exception against his batting, or the severity of his hitting. He would get in at the balls, and hit them away in a gallant style; yet, in this single feat, I think I have known him excelled; but when he could cut them at the point of the bat, he was in his glory; and upon my life their speed was as the speed of thought. One of the most beautiful sights that can be imagined, and which would have delighted an artist, was to see him make himself up to hit a ball. It was the beau-ideal of grace, animation, and concentrated energy. In this peculiar exhibition of elegance with vigour, the nearest approach to him I think was Lord Frederick Beauclerc. Upon one occasion at Mary-le-bone, I remember these two admirable batters being in together, and though Beldham was then verging towards his climacteric, yet both were excited to a competition, and the display of talent that was exhibited between them that day was the most interesting sight of its kind I ever witnessed. I should not forget, among his other excellencies, to mention that Beldham was one of the best judges of a short

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

run I ever knew, add to which, that he possessed a generally good knowledge of the game.

Hitherto I have spoken only of his batting. In this department alone, he had talent enough to make a dozen ordinary cricketers, but as a general fieldsman there were few better; he could take any post in the field, and do himself credit in it: latterly he usually chose the place of slip. But Beldham was a good change-bowler too; he delivered his balls high, and they got up well. His pace was a moderate one, yet bordering upon the quick. His principal fault in this department was, that he would often give a toss; taking him, however, as a change-bowler, he was one of the best. He would very quickly discover what a hitter could do, and what he could not do, and arrange his bowling accordingly. Finally, although his balls were commonly to the length, he was much better calculated for a change than to be continued a considerable length of time.

One of the finest treats in cricketing that I remember, was to see this admirable man in, with the beautiful bowling of Harris.

Having finished with the best batter of his own, or, perhaps, of any age—Beldham, we proceed to the very best bowler; a bowler who, between any one and himself, comparison must fail. DAVID HARRIS was, I believe, born, at all events he lived, at Odiham, in Hampshire; he was by trade a potter. He was a muscular, bony man,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

standing about five feet nine and a half inches. His features were not regularly handsome, but a remarkably kind and gentle expression amply compensated the defect of mere linear beauty. The fair qualities of his heart shone through his honest face, and I can call to mind no worthier, or, in the active sense of the word, not a more 'good man' than David Harris. He was one of the rare species that link man to man in bonds of fellowship by good works; that inspire confidence, and prevent the structure of society from becoming disjointed, and 'as it were, a bowing wall, or a tottering fence.' He was a man of so strict a principle, and such high honour, that I believe his moral character was never impeached. I never heard even a suspicion breathed against his integrity, and I knew him long and intimately. I do not mean that he was a *canter*.—Oh, no—no one thought of standing on guard, and buttoning up his pockets in Harris's company. I never busied myself about his mode of faith, or the peculiarity of his creed; that was his own affair, not mine, or any other being's on earth; all I know is, that he was an '*honest man*,' and the poet has assigned the rank of such a one in creation.

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to convey in writing an accurate idea of the grand effect of Harris's bowling; they only who have played against him can fully appreciate it. His attitude when preparing for his run previously

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

to delivering the ball, would have made a beautiful study for the sculptor. Phidias would certainly have taken him for a model. First of all, he stood erect like a soldier at drill; then, with a graceful curve of the arm, he raised the ball to his forehead, and drawing back his right foot, started off with his left. The calm look and general air of the man were uncommonly striking, and from this series of preparations he never deviated. I am sure that from this simple account of his manner, all my countrymen who were acquainted with his play will recall him to their minds. His mode of delivering the ball was very singular. He would bring it from under the arm by a twist, and nearly as high as his armpit, and with this action *push* it, as it were, from him. How it was that the balls acquired the velocity they did by this mode of delivery I never could comprehend.

When first he joined the Hambledon Club, he was quite a raw countryman at cricket, and had very little to recommend him but his noble delivery. He was also very apt to give tosses. I have seen old Nyren scratch his head, and say: 'Harris would make the best bowler in England if he did not toss.' By continual practice, however, and following the advice of the old Hambledon players, he became as steady as could be wished; and in the prime of his playing very rarely indeed gave a toss, although his balls were

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

pitched the full length. In bowling, he never stooped in the least in his delivery, but kept himself upright all the time. His balls were very little beholden to the ground when pitched; it was but a touch, and up again; and woe be to the man who did not get in to block them, for they had such a peculiar curl, that they would grind his fingers against the bat; many a time have I seen the blood drawn in this way from a batter who was not up to the trick; old Tom Walker was the only exception—I have before classed him among the bloodless animals.

Harris's bowling was the finest of all tests for a hitter, and hence the great beauty, as I observed before, of seeing Beldham in, with this man against him; for unless a batter were of the very first class, and accustomed to the best style of stopping, he could do little or nothing with Harris. If the thing had been possible, I should have liked to have seen such a player as Budd (fine hitter as he was) standing against him. My own opinion is, that he could not have stopped his balls, and this will be a criterion, by which those who have seen some of that gentleman's brilliant hits, may judge of the extraordinary merit of this man's bowling. He was considerably faster than Lambert, and so superior in style and finish, that I can draw no comparison between them. Lord Frederick Beauclerc has been heard to say that Harris's bowling was one of the grandest things

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

of the kind he had ever seen; but his Lordship could not have known him in his prime; he never saw him play till after he had had many fits of the gout, and had become slow and feeble.

To Harris's fine bowling I attribute the great improvement that was made in hitting, and above all in stopping; for it was utterly impossible to remain at the crease, when the ball was tossed to a fine length; you were obliged to get in, or it would be about your hands, or the handle of your bat; and every player knows where its next place would be.

Some years after Harris had played with the Hambledon Club, he became so well acquainted with the science of the game of cricket, that he could take a very great advantage in pitching the wickets. And not only would he pitch a good wicket for himself, but he would also consider those who had to bowl with him. The writer of this has often walked with him up to Windmill Down at six o'clock in the morning of the day that a match was to be played, and has with pleasure noticed the pains he has taken in choosing the ground for his fellow-bowler as well as himself. The most eminent men in every walk of life have at all times been the most painstaking; slabberdash work and indifference may accompany genius, and it does so too frequently; such geniuses, however, throw away more than half their chance. There are more brilliant talents in

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

this world than people give the world credit for; and that their lustre does not exhibit to the best advantage, commonly depends upon the owners of them. Ill luck, and the preference that frequently attends industrious mediocrity, are the only anodynes that wounded self-love or indolence can administer to misapplied or unused ability. In his walk, Harris was a man of genius, and he let slip no opportunity to maintain his pre-eminence. Although unwilling to detract from the fame of old Lumpy, I must here observe upon the difference in these two men with regard to pitching their wickets. Lumpy would uniformly select a point where the ball was likely to shoot, that is, over the brow of a little hill; and when by this forethought and contrivance, the old man would prove successful in bowling his men out, he would turn round to his party with a little grin of triumph; nothing gratified him like this reward of his knowingness. Lumpy, however, thought only of himself in choosing his ground; his fellow-bowler might take his chance; this was neither wise nor liberal. Harris, on the contrary, as I have already observed, considered his partner: and, in so doing, the main chance of the game. Unlike Lumpy, too, he would choose a rising ground to pitch the ball against, and he who is well acquainted with the game of cricket will at once perceive the advantage that must arise from a wicket pitched in this way to such a

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

tremendous bowler as Harris was. If I were urged to draw a comparison between these two great players, the greatest certainly in their department I ever saw, I could do it in no other way than the following: Lumpy's ball was always pitched to the length, but delivered lower than Harris's, and never got up so high; he was also slower than Harris, and lost his advantage by the way in which he persisted in pitching his wicket; yet I think he would bowl more wickets down than the other, for the latter never pitched his wicket with this end in view; almost all his balls, therefore, rose over the wicket; consequently, more players would be caught out from Harris than Lumpy, and not half the number of runs got from his bowling. I passed a very pleasant time with Harris when he came to my father's house at Hambledon, by invitation, after an illness, and for the benefit of the change of air. Being always his companion in his walks about the neighbourhood, I had full opportunity of observing the sweetness of his disposition; this, with his manly contempt of every action that bore the character of meanness, gained him the admiration of every cricketer in Hambledon.

In concluding my recollections of Harris, I had wellnigh omitted to say something of his skill in the other departments of the game. The fact is, the extraordinary merit of his bowling would have thrown any other fair accomplishments he

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

might possess into the shade; but, indeed, as a batter, I considered him rather an indifferent hand; I never recollect his getting more than ten runs, and those very rarely. Neither was his fielding remarkable. But he was game to the backbone, and never suffered a ball to pass him without putting his body in the way of it. If I recollect, he generally played slip.

The FREEMANTLES. There were two of them, and, I believe, brothers. JOHN and ANDREW were their names. One was an acknowledged player long before the other began. I am now, however, speaking of Freemantle the bowler. He, with Andrew, came from some town between Winchester and Alresford. John was a stoutly-made man; his standard about five feet ten inches. He delivered his ball high and well, and tolerably fast, yet he could not be ranked among the *fast* bowlers. The best compliment I can pay him is, that he was reckoned very successful, and, moreover, that his being a member of the Hambledon Club was sufficient guarantee for his general ability, as those sound and experienced judges would never admit as member any man who did not possess some qualifications above the common level.

As a batter, John Freemantle would have been reckoned a good hand in any club. He would now and then get many runs; yet withal, he could by no means be pronounced a *fine* batter. As a

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

man, he bore a high character for straightforward manly integrity; in short, he was a hearty John Bull, and flinched no more from doing his duty than he did from a ball in the field, and this he never did, however hard it might hit him.

Andrew was a shortish, well-set man, and a left-handed player. He was an uncommonly safe, as well as good hitter; and few wickets that I could name were more secure than Andrew's. He would often get long hands, and against the best bowling too; and when he had once warmed into his hitting, it was a deuced hard matter to get him out—an accident would frequently do the business. In his general style of batting he very much reminded me of Aylward, who has been spoken of some pages back. He usually played the long field, and was remarkably steady and safe in this department. But Andrew Freemantle could be depended upon, whatever he might undertake, whether in cricket or in his worldly dealings.

Upon one occasion when I had come up to London, I heard of a match being played in Lord's Ground, and of course made one of the spectators of my beloved amusement. Andrew Freemantle was in, and one of the new-fashioned bowlers, commonly called throwers, was bowling him. His name was WELLS, and I believe he came out of Sussex. He was the first I had seen of the new school, after the Walkers had attempted to introduce the system in the Hamble-

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

don Club. Wells frequently pitched his balls to the off-side of the wicket to Freemantle's left-handed hitting, who got in before the wicket, and hit the thrower's bowling behind him. Now, had he missed the ball, and it had hit his leg, although before the wicket, he would not have been out, because it had been pitched at the outside of the off-stump. I mention this trifling circumstance to show the knowledge the latter had of the game.

Andrew Freemantle's fielding was very fair; his post was generally the long field. He, however, must be so well known to many of the Mary-le-bone men now living, that I need enumerate no more of the peculiar characteristics of his playing.

Next comes that deservedly esteemed character, JOHN SMALL, son, and worthy successor to the celebrated batter of the same name. He, as well as his father, was a native of Petersfield. Young Small was a very handsomely-made man. For perfect symmetry of form, and well-knit, compact limbs and frame, his father was one of the finest models of a man I ever beheld; and the son was little inferior to him in any respect. Jack Small! my old club-fellow! when the fresh and lusty May-tide of life sent the blood gambolling through our veins like a spring runlet, we have had many a good bout together:

But now my head is bald, John,
And locks as white as snow,

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

and yours have, doubtless, bleached under the cold hand of mayhap threescore winters and more, but the churl has not yet touched the citadel. *My* heart is as sound as ever, and beats regular and true time to the tune of old and grateful thoughts for long friendships. You, I am sure, can echo this sentiment. You are a musician as well as a friend, and know the value of steadiness in both characters. I think we could give some of the young whipsters a little trouble even now. Like the old Knight of the 'Boar's Head,' we might need the *legs* of these Harry Monmouths; but it is my opinion we could bother them yet, at a good stand to our post. They would find some trouble to bowl down our stumps. They say, Jack, you were born with a bat in your hand. I can believe the tale, for I am sure you inherited the craft from both father and mother. She, I think, took as much delight and interest in the game as he. Many 's the time I have seen that worthy woman (every way deserving of so kind and excellent a husband) come galloping up the ground at a grand match, where he was to play (for, you know, she always accompanied him to those high solemnities), and no player even could show more interest in the progress of the game than she, and certainly no one, as was natural, felt so much pride in her husband's fine playing.

I do not remember, John, that you were much

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

of a bowler, but I remember that you were everything else, and that your judgment of the game was equal to that of any man. Your style of hitting, to my mind, was of the very first quality; and I can name no one who possessed a more accurate judgment of a short run. By the by—is that account true which I have heard, that upon one occasion, at Mary-le-bone, you and Hammond went in first, when there were only forty runs to get to win the match; and that you made an agreement together to run whenever the ball passed the wicket-keeper: that you did this, and between you got the whole forty runs before you were out? I have been told this anecdote of you both, and, if true, it clearly shows, according to my opinion, that the judgment of the people who played against you must have been strangely at fault, or they might have prevented it; for had but the long-stop been well acquainted with the game, he would have put you out.

I always admired your fielding, Jack: I am not sure that your middle wicket (the post that your father occupied) was not as good as his—though, I dare say, you would not allow this. Certain am I that a better never was put at that post. And now, farewell, my old club-fellow.

Reader! in a few words (now he has left the room), I assure you that in every way he was as complete a chap as I ever knew—a genuine chip of the old block—an admirable player, and a

CRICKETERS OF MY TIME

highly honourable man. The legs at Mary-le-bone never produced the least change in him; but, on the contrary, he was thoroughly disgusted at some of the manœuvres that took place there from time to time.

About the time that John Small had risen into the celebrity I have just been describing, his father and Nyren retired from the field. I cannot do better, in concluding these brief recollections, than enumerate the most eminent players in the Hambledon Club when it was in its glory.

DAVID HARRIS,
JOHN WELLS,
—— PURCHASE,
WILLIAM BELDHAM,
JOHN SMALL, JUN.,
HARRY WALKER,

TOM WALKER,
—— ROBINSON,
NOAH MANN,
—— SCOTT,
—— TAYLOR.

No eleven in England could have had any chance with these men; and I think they might have beaten any two-and-twenty.

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